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# MOTIVATING COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

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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.



**Main Image:** LILAC Collective Custom Build, Leeds.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Collective Custom Build is a pioneering approach to increasing diversity in the UK housing market based fundamentally on partnership. It represents an opportunity for stakeholders across the house-building industry to share the risk of development and work mutually to help people build homes that are more affordable and better designed to effectively meet the challenges of the future.

The UK housing crisis is both long term and wide reaching, rather than merely a short-term crisis of supply (around 100,000 new homes are built every year against a demand of official projections expect more than 232,000). Much of the housing we build in the UK is unaffordable, unsustainable, undesirable, unsociable or simply unavailable and much of the crisis is attributable to the way that most housing is built by a few large companies, who build products speculatively for sale, rather than individual households or groups of people building homes for themselves. This demonstrates the predilection of short-term asset-value over long-term use-value in the majority of housing procurement.

Self-provision in the UK remains fairly niche and accessible only to relatively few people when compared to other countries. Collective Custom Build represents an opportunity to 'scale it up' for the mainstream and there are established and successful schemes that have been completed across the country. Although each initiative is a product of its particular partnership of stakeholders and local context, Collective Custom Build schemes broadly fall into three categories: Independent Group Custom Build, Developer Enabled Custom Build and Supported Community Custom Build.

There are a number of promising schemes in the pipeline led by all sectors, including Local Authorities, private developers and other enabling organisations, and there is evidence of a growing interest in alternative development models in popular culture. There is also growing acceptance of the idea that the end users should have a greater say in the procurement of housing, fuelled by the propagation of new media for communication, collaborative consumption and co-investment that make it easier to facilitate, conceive of, develop and procure customised products.

In housing, there is evidence of an aspiration for self-provision amongst the general population, which looks likely to translate into actual demand in the market as the UK house-building industry responds by developing new business models and supply-chains. Whilst resonating clearly with the Localism agenda of the current government, the added value of supporting self-provision as part of a diverse housing market appeals across political parties and offers a clear route to supporting local economies and generating social value.

This report is based on an embedded knowledge exchange research project as part of the larger AHRC 'Home Improvements' project which ran from October 2013-14. The embedded project partners were University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes. It is linked to other outcomes from the embedded project which including an information-rich advocacy website and short film ([www.collectivecustombuild.org](http://www.collectivecustombuild.org)).

The research explores the position and role of Collective Custom Build within the UK house-building industry and concludes that whilst it should be considered as an emerging phenomenon, it has significant potential to provide opportunities for people to build their own homes. New models of cross-sector development and financial procurement are of fundamental importance, and in advocating for the Collective Custom Build sector this research concludes by sign-posting key stakeholders towards the next steps they can take towards supporting groups of people to build their own homes.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Motivating Collective Custom Build (MCCB) Project, through a host of web-based advocacy tools, makes the case for developing Collective Custom Build as part of a more diverse housing market in the UK. The web platform developed within the project uses an animated narrative to curate key research findings, revealing them as “peelbacks” pop-ups at key points in the argument. These “peelbacks” form the main body of this report and are presented as individual chapters followed by short conclusion.

Collective Custom Build is part of the MCCB practice-based research project within the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded as part of the Home Improvements Knowledge Exchange project (AH/K002651/1), based at the University of Sheffield. MCCB is led jointly by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture, Ash Sakula Architects and Design for Homes.

## AIM

This project set out to identify the legal, financial, statutory, institutional, and other practice barriers that currently prevent the adoption of collective custom build as a viable housing procurement strategy and to positively illustrate ways of overcoming such barriers, motivating key actors to engage in collective custom build as a viable and sustainable model of housing delivery. The research focused on motivational drivers in the key industry players in order to re-frame the scope of opportunities for small to medium scale custom build projects, and allow a far greater uptake and wider access.

The study attempted to bridge the gap between the commercial offering of the developer brochure and key knowledge distilled from research in the field which struggles for an audience. It did do so through the use of innovative knowledge exchange processes between key built environment actors and academic researchers, to develop and test a new suite of advocacy/dissemination tools.

## THE KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE PROCESS

Based on a case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2006) and practice-based theoretical framework (Guy and Shove, 2000, Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012) the project methodology was designed to synthesize existing knowledge (literature review), generalise new knowledge (case studies) and shape it through a number of planned interactions with industry (pan-industry workshop and focus group) in order to create a change in practices (advocacy film + web platform).

The field of collective custom build in UK, however, is a rapidly developing one, receiving a growing attention from politicians, the construction industry and the research community. Within the life of the MCCB project, many new proposals and projects, in terms of policy, innovative practice and research have come to light, necessitating a contingent methodological approach (Jackson and Webster 2007) that depends as much on monitoring and becoming actors in the field (strong social media presence, taking part in key events) as on more traditional methods of eliciting existing knowledge. The research methodology designed prior to starting the project was augmented and complemented by additional activities – in particular

networking with key industry players both in person and through social media. The research team embedded itself in a number of industry events and online exchanges generating both opportunities for gathering data and to disseminate project events and forthcoming outputs.

The methods used in the project are a combination of methods typically used in exploratory research exchanges - such as workshops, focus groups and interviews – with a novel hybrid of film and standalone mini-essays interwoven within a web platform. The film (creatively developed by the practitioners with help from the academics) is primarily aimed at Local Authorities and it is used to make a case for the need to consider Collective Custom Build as a valid option of housing provision; the research “peelbacks” (developed by the academics with help from the practitioners) appear on the screen to provide a rich context to back up with evidence the points made in the film.

An initial literature review of history, policy and current practice mined precedents from the UK and abroad for concrete detail: the likely characters, the legal backdrop, the collaborative processes and practices, the construction techniques and training on the job, which will all feed into the design research needed for sites targeted for collective custom build projects.

Key to the MCCB project was the dynamic interplay between research findings, industry players and the twin-tracked development of the advocacy film, designed to be engaging and to invite interested parties to find out more. Findings from literature review were tested and developed with a number of project partners and industry. Key themes were distilled through a process that involved reviewing existing literature, discussing with partners from private, public and third sector and conversing with a wide range with industry actors that agreed to help shape and refine the project agenda.



**Fig. i** - MCCB Workshop held at Ash Sakula Architects, London.

A comprehensive literature review report was produced, which informs the project web platform. Custom build is used to describe a wide range of models for procuring, building and managing housing. The benefits of, barriers to and opportunities for custom build in the UK context were tackled in *A Right to Build*<sup>1</sup>, where scaling-up self-build/custom build was identified as a key domestic project for the next decade. *A Right To Build* closely examined this challenge, explored the state of the industry at the time, attempted to de-bunk common myths, and outlined the shape of a mass self-build industry as a way forward for the UK. The MCCB literature review discusses the findings of the *A Right to Build* in the light of policy changes since 2011 and of the new opportunities that they have brought about, focusing on collective models of custom build.

As the project began the research team had extensive conversations with a number of key industry players. Those informal conversations were extremely valuable in shaping the direction of the project and in uncovering aspects of a context that is very much still emerging. A database of completed and emerging projects and the key actors involved in those projects was compiled; databases of potential interviewees and focus group participants were also created. These databases created a snapshot of the field at the time of researching as well as a platform for dissemination of project outcomes.

Formal in depth interviews were carried out with representatives from Local Authorities, Housing Associations and Developers that had been involved in collective custom build projects. It is important to note that since to date there are no UK developer led completed collective custom build projects we worked with a charity that for over thirty years has been developing collective custom build projects for vulnerable people.

The interviews validated key issues that had emerged through the literature review and through conversations with industry members - e.g. emerging models and barriers to collective custom build - but also brought to the fore issues that had not been picked up - e.g. the importance of partnerships and leadership in successful projects, the need for political championing at local as well as national level.

Other key conversations with representatives from the wider industry were sought in the context of a stakeholder workshop and a focus group. The workshop, at the beginning of the project, focused on identifying challenges and opportunities through designing for a specific site and sought feedback on the film's design and advocacy strategies. The Industry Focus Group, towards the end of the project, aimed to test the effectiveness of the film and its integration with the web platform and research 'peelbacks'.

The research 'peelbacks' summarised research evidence emerged from the literature review and insights from enablers and practitioners around the issues surrounding Collective Custom Build. These follow next.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Right to Build* was a Knowledge Transfer collaboration between Dr Cristina Cerulli and Dr Tatjana Schneider from the School of Architecture at the University of Sheffield and Alastair Parvin and David Saxby from Architecture 00:/. The Project completed in 2011; the book *A Right to Build* was awarded the RIBA President's Awards for Outstanding Practice-located Research in Dec 2012. Parvin et al (2011) *A Right To Build*. Sheffield: University of Sheffield [WWW] Available from: [http://issuu.com/alastairparvin/docs/2011\\_07\\_06\\_arighttobuild](http://issuu.com/alastairparvin/docs/2011_07_06_arighttobuild) [Accessed 08/05/2013].

# 1 UK HOUSING CRISIS

## WHY WE HAVE A HOUSING CRISIS

In the UK our housing needs are not being met. We are not building enough homes and the ones we are building, generally, are not meeting the needs of their occupants or of the communities within which development takes place (Banham et al., 2012; Burgess et al., 2010).

Just over 100,000 new homes were built in England in each of the last two financial years, whereas official projections expect more than 232,000 new households each year up to 2033 (Pawson and Wilcox, 2012, p. 4). On top of this, the housing stock we are building does not meet basic space requirements (Banham et al., 2012, pp. 2–3; 7) and is not resilient enough to meet key challenges such as the changing needs of an ageing population (Hughes, 2012), addressing the affordability of housing for younger people (Pennington et al., 2012), and essential targets for reductions in energy usage and the carbon footprint of development (DCLG, 2007a, p. 9; Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 5)<sup>2</sup>.

In *'A Right To Build - The Next Mass-Housebuilding Industry'* (2011), Parvin et al. conduct a thorough deconstruction of the UK housing market, observing that the UK housing crisis is both long-term and wide-reaching - a crisis of un-availability, un-desirability, un-affordability, un-sustainability and unsociability - and as much a crisis of *who* is building our houses as of what we are building (Ibid. 2011). The authors describe the UK housing market is a complex and controversial system, widely accepted to prioritise supply-side economy and short-term asset-value as a speculative investment over long-term sustainability or actual use value as housing (Ibid. 2011, p. 15) and go on to describe how the UK has come to be dependent upon a small number of large volume house-builders to deliver the bulk of our housing; a condition that has its roots in increasing industrialisation and the rise of consumerism prevalent in recent decades, and one that illustrates the divorce of the producers of housing from its user beneficiaries. The observation is made that consistent under-supply of housing - where 'big-provider' models failed to meet demand even in times for boom-time prosperity - is symptomatic of a market dependent upon speculation on ever-increasing property values in order to function. It is also observed that - because speculative housing is built to sell, rather than to live in - volume house-building is a production process that more or less stops if the market falls (Ibid. 2011, p. 32), as it did following the 2008 financial crisis in the UK.

The house-building industry has become fixated with scale, requiring delivery by large companies that are able to spread risk of operating in a volatile market more widely. Parvin et al. conclude that we need *'some kind of quiet, but profound industrial revolution in housebuilding'* in order to develop *'more rational, sustainable models of housing production which are viable in an age of scarce resources, and better suited to our policy goals of energy-efficiency, quality, affordability and strong community'* (Ibid. 2011, p. 12).

There is indeed a broader consensus beyond Parvin et al. that we need a radical change in the way we procure housing, in order to provide greater consumer choice and stimulate a competitive environment for private house-building, as well as developing alternative routes to affordable and social housing (Barlow et al., 2001; Barker, 2004; Parvin et al., 2011; DCLG, 2011; Miles and Whitehouse,

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst the UK moves ever closer to the legally-binding commitment to reduce total household greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by the year 2050 (DECC, 2013, p. 3), and the target for every newly built home to be carbon neutral by 2016 (DCLG, 2007b, p. 5; Zero Carbon Hub, 2013a), Miles & Whitehouse (2013) describe how most housing is built by house-builders who currently have no interest in the performance of the new homes in use beyond the provisions of the normal structural warranties and generally unlikely to see any commercial advantage in constructing new homes to a level of performance above the basic requirements set by Regulations. (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 5), whilst the Zero Carbon Hub observes a growing realisation that homes designed to meet current and future standards of energy performance may fall short of expectations (Zero Carbon Hub, 2013b, p. 1) .



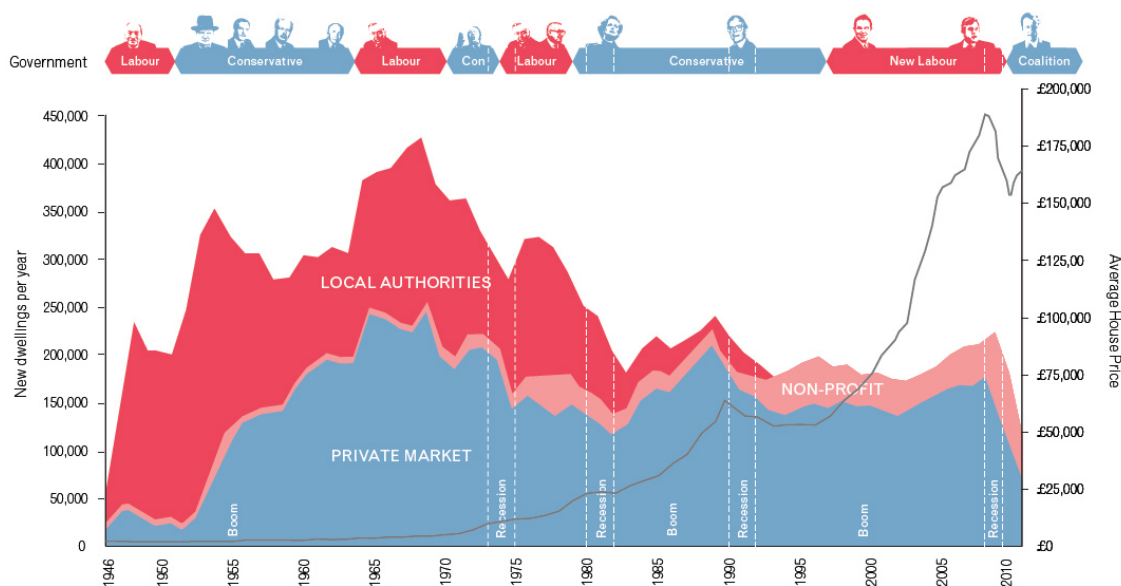
2013; HM Treasury, 2013, pp. 39–43). In acknowledging the need for a more diverse housing market, we are experiencing the end of the big house-builder era (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 17) and have an opportunity to develop alternatives, such as ‘self-provision’, defined by Parvin et al. as describing:

“...any process whereby those who will be living in the dwellings take responsibility for procuring their own home. This includes not just those who physically construct the structure themselves, but also those who contract certain tasks out to professionals but retain the central role of carrying the financial risk for the project and having control over design decisions.”

(Ibid. 2011, p. 30).

Out-lining large-scale ‘self-provision’ as an alternative to speculative volume house-building, Parvin et al. note that self-provided housing can be a route to higher quality and less energy-hungry dwellings as part of a more resilient housing supply, unlocking financial investment and supporting the function of communities whilst making available a more diverse and generous housing stock that remains affordable in the long-term (Ibid. 2011, pp. 30–35).

This research has found that a greater fulfilment of self-provision depends largely on the development of alternative models for delivery at scale, that can be achieved through a combination of strong political leadership and innovative partnerships that enable alternative financial models for the procurement of housing.



**Fig.1** - A Brief History of Post War Housing - Showing housing supply (broken down into sector) against average house price and political leadership since 1945, prepared by Parvin et al. (2011, p. 10) using data from *The Calcutt Review of Housebuilding Delivery* (DCLG, 2007a). The graph shows the sharp decline in the production of housing in recent few years as well as the rapid ascent of average house-prices.

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## 2 AROUND THE WORLD

### VOLUME HOUSE-BUILDING IS NOT NORMAL

The UK is dependent upon volume house-building<sup>3</sup> due to a complex range of interdependent factors including industry culture and lack of diversity in procurement and financial models. However, this remains unusual in the world context.

In other countries, it is relatively common for people to build their own homes and for self-provision<sup>4</sup> to represent a pervasive and viable procurement route for housing alongside buying - or renting - an existing or speculatively built property. In Austria, for example, self-provision accounts for up to 80% of housing supply (NaSBA, 2008, p. 10); in Germany, around 60% (NaSBA, 2011 IN; McVitty and Building Societies Association, 2012); Hungary, 52%; France, 38%; Sweden, 30%; and in the 'transition countries' of Eastern Europe, self-provision generally represents over 50% of housing supply (Dol and Haffner, 2010 IN; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16).

Self-provision is commonly acknowledged to represent between 7% (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013; Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 25) and 10% (McVitty and Building Societies Association, 2012; NaSBA, 2008, p. 10) of new-build UK housing supply<sup>5</sup>, although the figure varies significantly between the devolved regions of the UK, as low as 4% in Wales and as high as 25% in Northern Ireland (AMA Research, 2011 IN; Architecture Centre Network, 2012).

Although precise comparative evidence is relatively out of date<sup>6</sup>, the pervasiveness of self-provision in housing supply internationally is confirmed anecdotally and acknowledged by the central UK Government (DCLG, 2011), which published its own research into international self-build housing practices (NaSBA, 2011, pp. 6–7; Owen et al., 2011), in association with the National Self Build Association (NaSBA), in the preparation of its most recent Housing Strategy (DCLG, 2011).

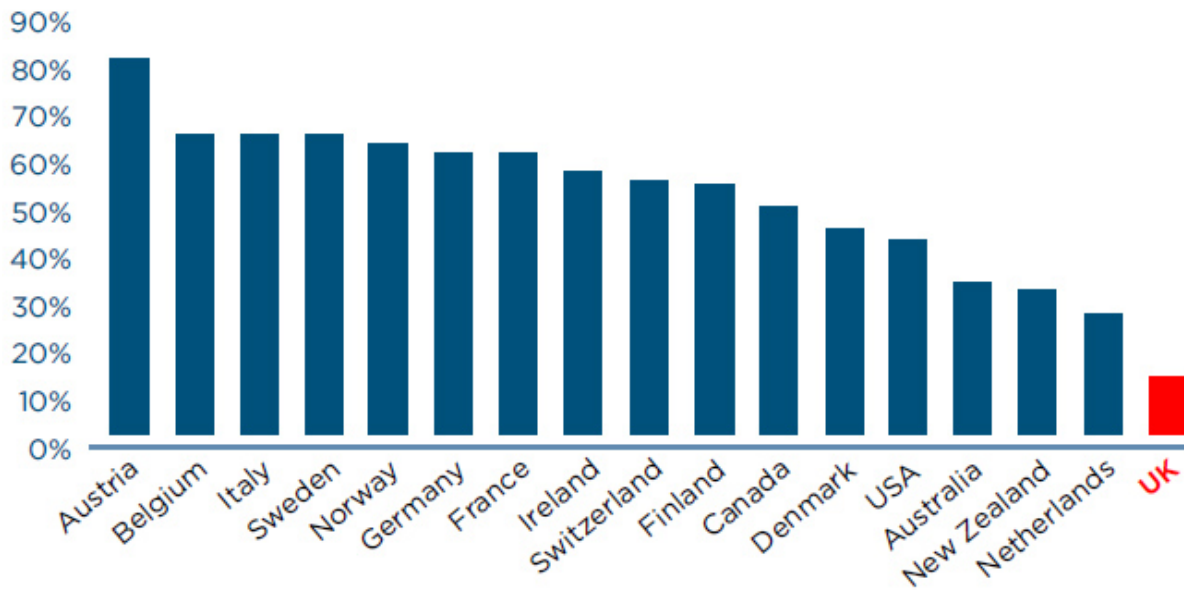
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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to 'UK Housing Crisis' in this study.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to 'Self-Provided Housing' in this study.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible to account for the discrepancy between figures using separate auditing for the UK and for England, with the 10% figure normally representing an average of the figures for the devolved regions of the UK. England is below the UK average, typically cited as 7%, whilst Northern Ireland is significantly above average at 25%, dragging the figure upwards.

<sup>6</sup> Although Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research produces up-to-date, quarterly figures for self-build completions in the UK, most sources regularly quote data from the 1990s when making international comparisons. The original data, appears in Duncan and Rowe (1992), and is referenced by the Building & Social Housing Foundation (Eccleshare et al., 2005). It is this latter study that has significantly influenced advocacy work conducted by the National Self Build Association (NaSBA, 2008, 2011), that has in turn influenced reports and policy documents issued by the UK Government (DCLG, 2011). It forms the basis of the 'ubiquitous blue graph' (See NaSBA, 2008, p. 10 for an example.) that usually forms part of the introduction to presentations by the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and, increasingly, other significant individuals and organisations within the sector. The most up-to-date survey of available comparative data for self-provided housing between the UK and Europe exists in the Centre for Housing Policy's 'Build-it-yourself?' report, published jointly by the University of York and Lloyds Banking Group (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16), which references data from Housing Statistics In The European Union 2010 by Dol and Haffner (2010). However, this data uses a definition of self-provision that varies from country to country and generally restricts such definitions to include only single private dwellings. As such, the available data is unlikely to reflect the true extent of comparable self-provided housing between European countries. Available comparative data for countries beyond the European Union seems to be restricted to that used by NaSBA, derived from the work of Duncan & Rowe (1992).



**Fig.2** - The proportion of all homes delivered by self-build in the UK is low - Illustration taken from the Self Build Government-Industry Working Group report 'An Action Plan to promote the growth of self build housing', published by NaSBA (2011, p. 6) which represents the 'ubiquitous blue graph' (See NaSBA 2008, p.10 for an example) that usually forms part of the introduction to presentations by the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and, increasingly, other significant individuals and organisations within the sector. It is based upon relatively out-of-date comparative data from the 1990s, although the figure for the UK is corroborated by regular domestic market research (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013).

Dol et al. (2012) observe that 'historic developments within the housing and planning systems, the propensity of the government to provide housing, and the emergence of large volume housebuilders and/or local commitments to the ethos of home ownership may all be important factors' that why often quite similar countries have such large differences in the incidence of self-provided housing, although definitive answers remain unclear (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 16).

In a significant number of comparable countries - such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France, Australia, Ireland and the USA - the pervasiveness and resilience of self-provision as a means of procuring housing is dependent upon a number of critical factors:

1. *Popular Culture and Know How about Self-Provision* - In many cases, self-provision has remained a part of popular culture, representing a 'normal' thing to do<sup>7</sup>. The means of accessing land, finance and development partners is more widely known amongst citizens. This results in relatively healthy proportions of home that are self-procured, like, for instance, 80% of homes in Austria. NaSBA also attribute regional variation of the pervasiveness of self-provision within the UK to local cultural tradition, for example, in the way that local planning policy in Northern Ireland - in which self-provision contributes around 25% of housing supply (AMA Research, 2011 IN; Architecture Centre Network, 2012) - is more likely to be 'light touch' and reflect a cultural heritage of self-provision (NaSBA, 2011, p. 6).
2. *Culture of the Industry* - In comparable countries, like Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, the supply-chain for the house-building industry is more visibly orientated towards self-provision, with 'home manufacturers' and small builders being more familiar with dealing directly with clients on a 'custom build' basis. Offsite manufacturing is also much more common - including partnerships between home manufacturers and designers - and forms part of a supply-chain set up to directly serve self-providers. This represents a significant

<sup>7</sup> This has been particularly well-documented in Germany (Chan, 2010a, 2010b; NaSBA, 2011, p. 6) and Argentina (Redstone, 2012; Redstone et al., 2013), whilst the National Self Build Association and Self Build Government-Industry Working Group highlight the occurrence of self-provision in Ireland, Australia, the Netherlands and the USA (NaSBA, 2011, pp. 6-7).

enabling factor, saving time and money on site and reducing risk to self-providers (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013 IN; Self Build Portal, 2013).

3. *Leadership and Political Will* - In comparable countries, strong, local political leadership is often a critical factor in creating opportunities for self-provision on a large-scale. This is usually achieved through the allocation of land by local authority for self-provided house-building. Anecdotally, local authorities in comparable countries - such as the Netherlands and Germany - are also used to using their land-holdings and powers of land allocation to achieve wider policy objectives beyond providing housing<sup>8</sup>, and are more used to dealing with individual households or self-providing groups directly in terms of land sales, managing development or providing infrastructure (Brinkley, 2013; Brown, 2013; Hill, 2013; Zogolovitch, 2013a),

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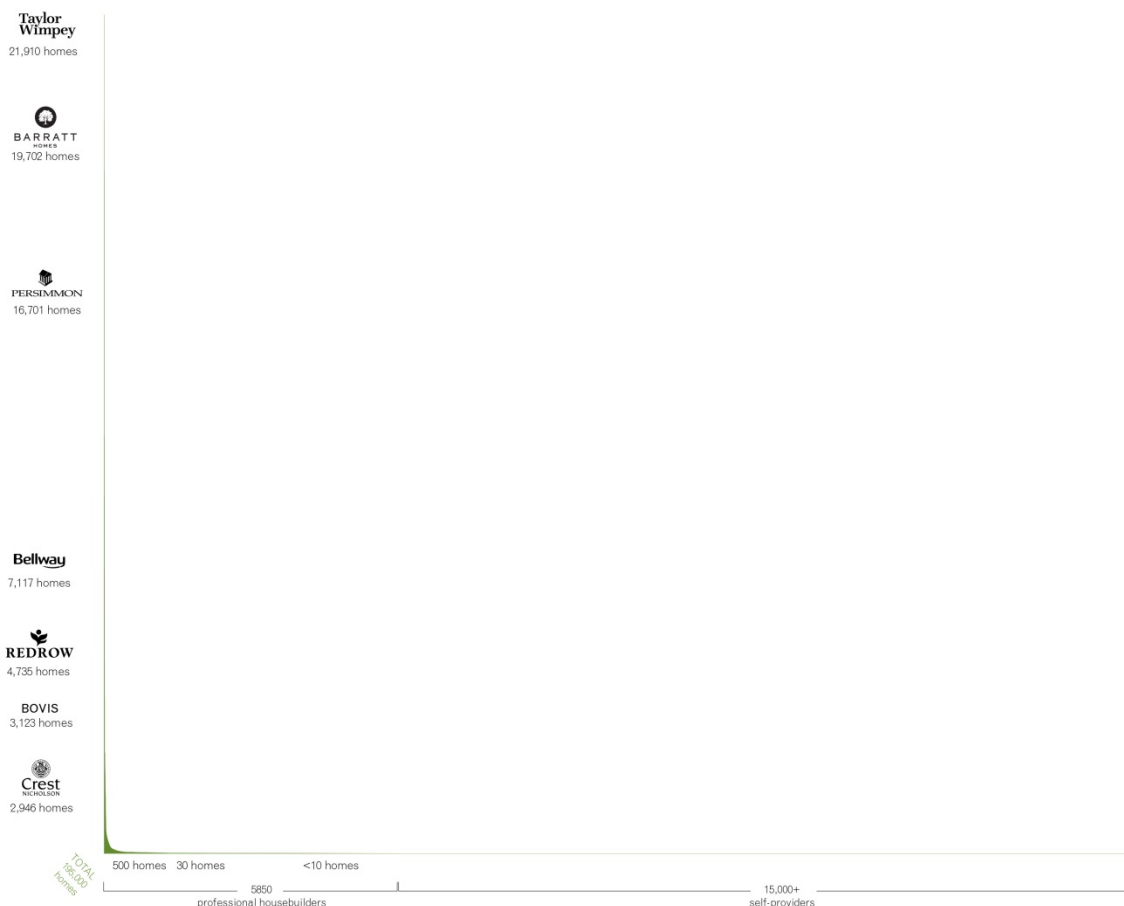
<sup>8</sup> An example of this would be the way that local authority used house-building to directly 'skill-up' local 'building communities' (self-building groups that form development companies with assistance from the municipality) in order to build local development capacity through policy. The strategy is implemented by making use of a Städtebauliche Entwicklungsmassnahme ("Urban Development Act", §165 BauGB) which allows a municipality to remain in control of the development process. This mechanism can be invoked by a Local Authority "wherever it is required to serve public needs ... especially an increased need for housing and employment opportunities" (§165.3.2) and "where the same objectives cannot be achieved through conventional contracts (with a developer)" (§165.3.3)". (CABE, 2011).

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# 3 SELF-PROVIDED HOUSING

## THE SECTOR ALREADY EXISTS IN THE UK AND CAN BE HELPED TO GROW

Whilst the UK is largely dependent upon a small number of volume house-builders to deliver the bulk of our housing, they are not the only people building houses:



**Fig.3 - Who Builds Our Houses?** - The distribution of power in Britain's housing supply. (House-builders along the horizontal axis by the number of houses they completed in 2006.), prepared by Parvin et al. (2011, pp. 4–5), excluding Northern Ireland, using data collected from the National Housebuilding Council, Calcutt Review, Joseph Rowntree Foundation Housing and Neighbourhoods Monitor.

Besides Private Registered Providers of Social Housing (PRPSHs)<sup>9</sup> - such as Housing Associations<sup>10</sup> and organisations formerly referred to as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)<sup>11</sup> - who continue to build a

<sup>9</sup> Registered Providers of Social Housing can be non-profit or for-profit, and are defined by HM Revenue and Customs as replacing Registered Social Landlords in England (not Wales) under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008(HM Revenue & Customs, 2013),

<sup>10</sup> "Housing associations are the main providers of new not-for-profit housing in England, with around 3.5 million people living in housing association accommodation. They are also known as registered social landlords (RSLs) or Private Registered Providers of Social Housing (PRPSHs). Housing associations do not make a profit. Any money they do make is put back into improving existing homes and helping to build new ones". (Shelter, 2013a).

significant number of homes on both a for-profit and non-profit basis<sup>12</sup>, there are also considerable numbers of private self-providers and small private builders<sup>13</sup> who build only a few homes per year, yet collectively represent an established sector, described by Parvin et al. as 'house-building's long-tail' (2011, pp. 7–9)<sup>14</sup>.

Although self-provided housing is by no means a new phenomenon<sup>15</sup>, Parvin et al. also offer the most comprehensive definition of self-provision, and its renewed relevance as an idea for increasing the supply of housing in the UK is discussed in the '*Defining Collective Custom Build*' chapter of this research:

*"...regarding any process whereby those who will be living in the dwellings take responsibility for procuring their own home, including not just those who physically construct the buildings, as well as those who contract certain tasks out to professionals but keep a central role, carrying the financial risk for the project and having control over design decisions."*

(Parvin et al., 2011, p. 30)

Collectively, self-providers - whether groups of people or individual households - already build as many homes as the largest volume house-builder<sup>16</sup>, a fact acknowledged by the central UK Government<sup>17</sup>. Parvin et al. (2011) point out that growing the self-provided housing sector is the most obvious route to creating a more diverse and stable housing market that is less prone to speculation and volatility and claim that self-provision is intrinsically more capable of delivering housing of high-quality, affordability, sustainability and resilience (Ibid. 2011, p. 9). If enabled correctly by local authority and central Government policy, by the development of new models for procurement and by investment in supply chains, self-provision could contribute significantly to the production of large volumes of high-quality, affordable homes across the UK (NaSBA, 2008; Morton, 2013, p. 5; Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013)<sup>18</sup>.

Although it is widely accepted that no single solution will solve the UK housing crisis on its own, it is clear that a greater diversity in the housing market will make housing supply more resilient, increasing

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<sup>11</sup> Shelter define RSLs as 'a housing association or other organisation that provides housing at lower rents than private landlords and is registered with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulation Committee'. Registered social landlords are also known as private registered providers of social housing (PRPSHs). (Shelter, 2013b)

<sup>12</sup> Parvin et al. point out that although these organisations might be more socially-minded, they still predominantly build houses as assets - all be it political ones rather than financial ones. Success is measured by indicators such as the 'number of affordable homes built', rather than by their use-value as homes to live in, and as such are as prone to cost-benefit evaluation that prioritises supply-side economy over end-user utility, and exhibit similar deficiencies to volume house-builder products.

<sup>13</sup> According to representatives of the house-building and construction industries, a 'small-builder' builds 31 homes or less per year (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Parvin et al. refer to Anderson's concept of the 'long-tail' and observations concerning the 'prosumer revolution' (Anderson, 2010 IN; Parvin et al., 2011, p. 8), which describes how many small producers can have an affect comparable to a few large ones. It is also possible to read about Anderson's interpretation of 'the Long Tail' directly in his original article for Wired magazine (Anderson, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Please refer to Barlow et al. (2001, p. 15) for an account of the history of self-provision in the UK, including reference to the well-documented activities of the community architecture movement and rise in popularity of the Segal Method of self-build construction in the 1980s, a comprehensive exploration of which is beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>16</sup> Total house-building completions for England in 2012-13 was either 115,600 (DCLG, 2013a, p. 5) or 108,190 (DCLG, 2013b) according to the Department for Communities & Local Government. Homebuilding & Renovating record 10,940 self-build completions for the year 2012-13 (9.5-10.1% of the total) (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013), whilst figures stand at 12,637 (10.9-11.7%) for Barratt Developments (Barratt Developments Plc, 2013), 10,886 (9.4-10.1%) for Taylor Wimpey (Taylor Wimpey Plc, 2013, p. 18) and 9,903 (8.6-9.1%) for Persimmon (Persimmon Plc, 2013, p. 2).

<sup>17</sup> The figure of 13,800 "custom build" completions is given for the year 2010/11, described by the Department for Communities & Local Government as "as many new homes each year as each of our volume housebuilders" (DCLG, 2011, p. 14)

<sup>18</sup> Morton (2013), particularly, describes self-provision, enabled by a mechanism that facilitates compulsory land sales directly to 'self-builders' where local authorities fail to meet their housing targets, as being capable of delivering 210,000 homes per year by 2014 (Morton, 2013, p. 5), in comparison to the approximately 110,000 homes currently delivered annually across all sectors (DCLG, 2013b).



consumer choice in the supply of new housing as well as stimulating innovation in the mainstream housing industry (Barlow et al., 2001, p. 32). Diversity is desirable on two levels; both in diversifying the range of housing suppliers and by derivation, the supply of new housing stock:

1. *Diversifying Suppliers* - A diverse range of housing suppliers procuring housing via a range of for-profit, non-profit and self-provided financial models represents a more resilient market, more able to deliver consistent volumes of overall production in times of economic uncertainty. Where one model becomes unviable, others may become more viable and more able to harness investment where access to the usual means such as cheap credit and generous mortgages become constrained.
2. *Diversifying Stock* - A diverse range of suppliers will produce a diverse range of new-build property types, available on a range of tenures which - combined with renovations and the available existing housing stock - means that households are more likely to be able to procure a property that suits their needs, affordably and in a location that supports a sustainable and economic lifestyle.

In other countries - such as Germany, where up to 60% of housing is self-provided (NaSBA, 2011, p. 6) - a more pervasive self-provided housing sector also has the added effect of raising quality across the housing market as a whole, as speculative house-builders must compete commercially on *quality* in order to offer a superior product to that which can be self-provided relatively easily (Brinkley, 2013).

Parvin et al. (2011, p. 30) also describe how self-provision is more likely to result in better quality housing through the simple fact that user-led cost-benefit evaluation prioritises long-term use value over short-term financial or political asset value:

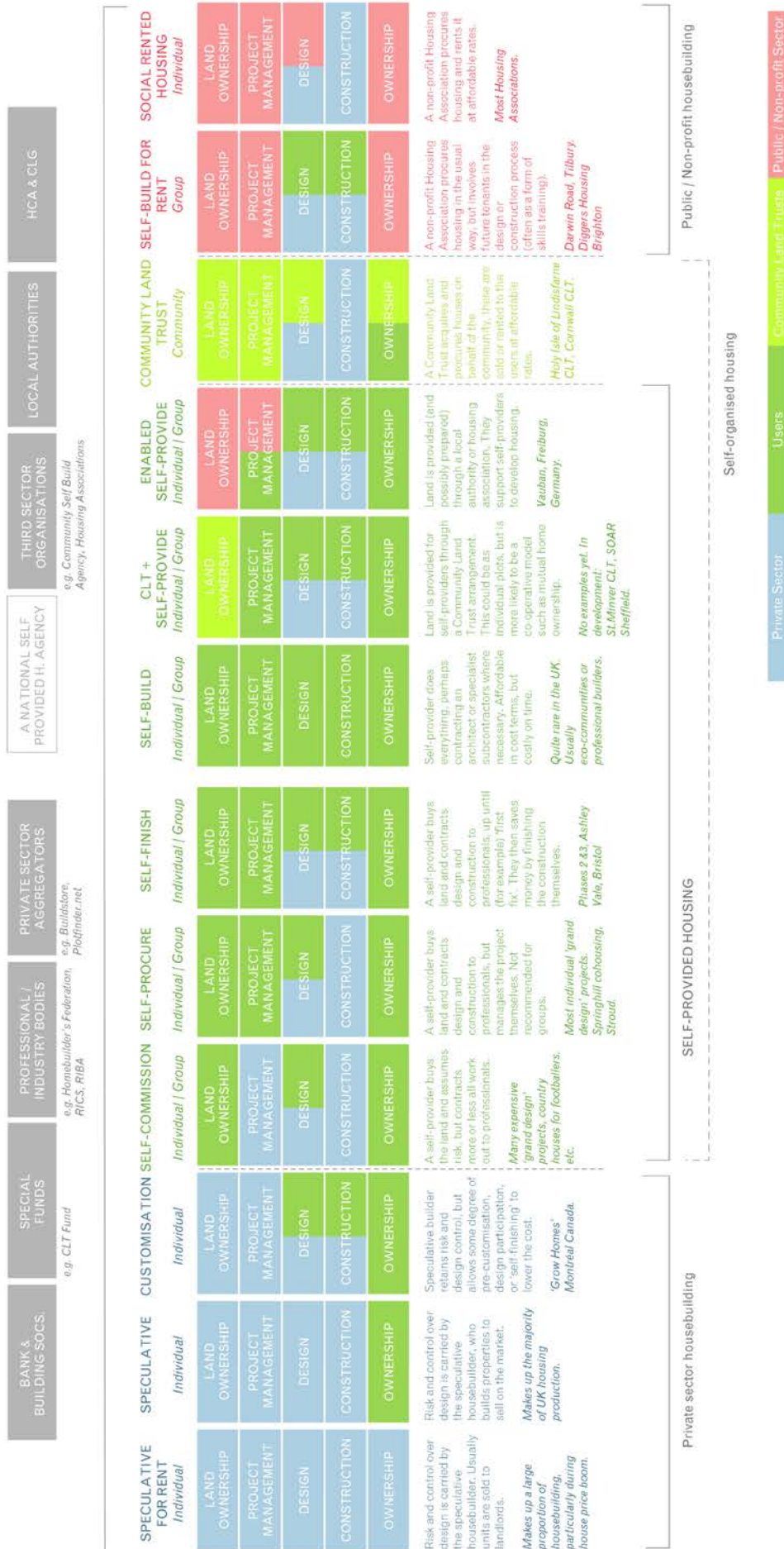
*“There are two key reasons ... Firstly, because the design decisions are taken by the long-term user, this extends the cost equation to take in the whole life-cycle of the building. For example, money invested in increased energy performance of the building fabric is offset against reduced energy bills in the future – so decisions to invest up-front in better insulation (which would be irrational for a speculative housebuilder) become rational ones for a self-provider, who has a stake in long-term as well as short-term savings. A similar principle can apply to qualitative choices. For example, a canny speculative developer might realise that by lowering the ceiling heights of a dwelling, he can save, say, two thousand pounds. In itself this is not much, but multiplied across an entire development, it yields a significant extra margin. By contrast, a self-provider would probably not see that two thousand pound saving as a worthwhile economy.*

*Secondly, a self-provider may also (inadvertently) make ‘irrational’ design choices which favour increased use-value, because they are making those decisions within what behavioural economists might refer to as a ‘social norm’ rather than a pure ‘market norm’. In other words, as they design, the self-provider is not only calculating the cost of the project and protecting its long-term asset-value, but also imagining their home as a place to live. We’re human – we simply can’t help ourselves: “I really want big south windows because I like to sit in the sun.’... ‘I’m a guitarist, so I need somewhere to practice without disturbing the neighbours’...”*

(Parvin et al., 2011, p. 30)

Sources frequently acknowledge that ‘scaling up’ self-provision to form a viable mainstream procurement method requires some form of enabling support, and needs to be delivered on multi-unit sites, rather than as one-off, detached, individual dwellings, which currently represent the majority of ‘self-builds’(Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2012).

Parvin et al.’s ‘Catalogue of Self-Provided Housing’(2011, pp. 50–51) illustrates the range of different types of ‘self-provided housing’, however, it is the collective forms - that afford multi-unit, self-provided housing developments - that are of interest to this study:



**Fig.4 - Catalogue of Self-Provided Housing** - This chart is taken from 'A Right To Build - The Next Mass-Housebuilding Industry' (Parvin et al. 2011, pp.50-51) and illustrates a comprehensive model for describing the spectrum of self-provided housing in terms of Land Ownership, Project Management, Design, Construction and Ownership, highlighting, for each model, whether each of these aspects is led by the private sector, the users or the public/not-for-profit sector.

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# 4 SUCCESSFUL SCHEMES

## SUCCESSFUL SCHEMES IN THE UK AND ABROAD

There are a number of successfully completed schemes - both in the UK and internationally - that can be broadly categorised by the three families of Collective Custom Build<sup>19</sup>.

In the UK, most established models are of the *Independent Group Custom Build* or *Supported Community Custom Build* variety. There is a rich, if relatively niche history of independent 'group self-build' in the UK, and according to the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) there have also been around twenty multi-unit 'self-build' projects delivered by Housing Associations, Registered Providers or councils over the last thirty years, working in partnership with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations such as the Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) or private sector organisations like D&O Management Services Ltd. These organisations help to set up the scheme, recruit the participants and 'drive' them to completion (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 10). By contrast, it has only been possible to identify two clear examples of completed developer-enabled schemes in the UK.

There are many more schemes now at a developmental stage as the momentum grows with Collective Custom Build. Wallace et al. observe that new models of group or multi-unit schemes are emerging led by developers or local authorities in particular, which represent a diverse range of pilot initiatives and are likely to grow in the short-term as a response to Government initiatives (2013, p. 8), such as the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>20</sup> and HCA Custom Build Homes Fund (HCA, 2012, 2013a)<sup>21</sup>.

NaSBA confirms that large numbers<sup>22</sup> of local authorities that are looking to initiate or deliver schemes (Stevens, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c) and given the pace at which new schemes are coming forward, this may well have increased by the date of publication of this report. There is anecdotal evidence from a range of developers and house builders of all sizes, including national companies, who are attracted by the opportunity to develop new products and services for self-builders of all types (NaSBA, 2011a, p. 9). Additionally, this study has observed significant interest amongst private companies in the opportunities presented by Collective Custom Build in particular<sup>23</sup> and there are a number of developers actively promoting Custom Build or 'volume self-build' services (Iglou, 2013; HAB, 2013; Urban Self Build, 2013; Fairgrove Homes Ltd, 2013; Solidspace, 2013; Concept2 Group, 2013 and others).

There are a number of important international reference points for Collective Custom Build, with key examples such as the Homeruskwartier in Almere, Netherlands and Vauban, in Friburg, Germany frequently cited in published literature and recognised as offering opportunities for learning by

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<sup>19</sup> The three main categories of Collective Custom Build are: Independent Group Custom Build; Developer Enabled Custom Build; and Supported Community Custom Build. Please refer to 'Defining Collective Custom Build' in this study for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>20</sup> See The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) overview of the NPPF (RTPI, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Please refer also to 'Statute & Policy' in this study.

<sup>22</sup> NaSBA Chair, Ted Stevens gives the figure of 'around 20 housing associations and 45 local authorities' are looking at some form of self-build delivery (Stevens, 2013a).

<sup>23</sup> Evidence for this is anecdotal and is drawn from interaction in sessions at workshops specifically for this research (Ash et al., 2013; Brown et al., 2013) and significant industry events, such as: the 'Sustainable Self Build & Renovation' seminar stream at the EcoBuild 2013 exhibition in London, 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> March 2013 (EcoBuild, 2013; specifically Stevens, 2013b, 2013d; Hill, 2013a; Everard, 2013); the Green Sky Thinking series of workshops and seminars held across London, 15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> April 2013 (Green Sky Thinking, 2013; specifically Brown, 2013); events held nationally as part of National Self Build Week, 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> May 2013 (National Self Build Week, 2013; specifically Stevens, 2013c); and a seminar organised by the Urban Design Group on Alternative Housing Models in London on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013 (Urban Design Group, 2013; specifically Zogolovitch, 2013; Brenton, 2013; Devlin, 2013; Moore, 2013; Hill, 2013b).

central Government and industry bodies<sup>24</sup>. The Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) points out that European examples are particularly relevant points of reference, because they too are governed by EU State Aid, which controls how governments can support projects financially (HCA, 2012, p. 9) and regulates initiatives that may distort trade between member states.

Some international instances of Collective Custom Build - such as the German *Baugemeinschaften* or "building-community" (id22 et al., 2012, p. 105; Chan, 2010a, 2010b; Stevens, 2013c) and Argentinian *Fideicomiso* ("trust") models (Redstone et al., 2013; Redstone, 2012; CASS, 2013) - better represent broader phenomena in popular culture, where the means of accessing custom built housing is widely known and schemes are predominantly procured as group or multi-unit schemes.

However, it is important to note that UK models of Collective Custom Build differ slightly but significantly from those in Europe and the US, where many self-provided houses are either pre-fabricated in factories and sold to owners who have a serviced plot and foundations in place, or built by home-manufacturers and small-builders who are used to dealing directly with self-providing land-owners. The key differentiator for the UK is the prohibitive cost and complexity of obtaining a plot of land, serviced or otherwise, and there is consensus across the literature that access to land - particularly serviced plots - is one of the biggest barriers to a greater fulfilment of self-provided housing in the UK, alongside access to finance and the establishment of a self-provided housing industry (Parvin et al., 2011a; NaSBA, 2011a, 2012; Wallace et al., 2013; Morton, 2013 and others.).

Although successfully completed Collective Custom Build schemes are commonly led by one particular stakeholder group, a critical factor for success - in the UK and internationally - is often an innovative enabling partnership between self-providing groups, public sector enablers and private development partners. Strong, local political leadership is also commonly cited as a major motivating factor.

### Lancaster Cohousing - Independent

The Lancaster Cohousing project at Forgebank, on the outskirts of the village of Halton in Lancaster is a certified Passivhaus / Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 and Life Time Homes, affordable community housing project, which has evolved through a participatory design process with the individual householders and Eco Arc Architects (Jennings et al., 2012).

41 zero carbon homes and additional communal facilities - such as guest bedrooms, a play room and some workshops/offices in a converted mill building - have been built on a riverside site, costing between £100-300k each (Stevens, 2013a). The houses roughly match or slightly exceed the cost of a 'normal' home of equivalent size in the surrounding area, but offer vastly improved environmental performance - leading to reduced running costs - and access to shared facilities in a prime location (NaSBA, 2011b, p. 9). The project has taken a relatively long time to complete, beginning in 2004 and finishing in 2013.

The site was purchased by a Cohousing Company established to procure and manage the development, after the site had been reposed from its former owners by a Receiver. The group also accessed a full package of professional consultancy support including architectural design, structural and environmental engineering, quantity surveying and project management (Jennings et al., 2012).

Importantly, with this assistance, the group were able to make the site work much more effectively than would be possible through 'normal' development practice, which would have prioritised direct individual access to the street and sought to provide a car parking space outside each dwelling. Instead, the group chose to share access to a car pool, restricting vehicle parking to one portion of the site (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 7).

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<sup>24</sup> The Homeruskwartier in Almere, Netherlands, and the Vauban district of Freiburg, Germany, feature frequently as points of reference in a number of key sources (Parvin et al., 2011a; DCLG, 2011a; Owen et al., 2011; NaSBA, 2011a, 2013a; Roberts, 2012 and others.) as well as in presentations available via the Homes and Communities Agency, originally presented at the HCA Custom Build Workshop in Middlesbrough on 29th January 2013 (HCA, 2013a, 2013b).

A contractor built out the scheme to a design specified by the eventual occupants, who occupy the majority of the homes as leasehold, having sold off a small number of properties as freehold in order to part finance the project (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 7).

The total cost of the project was around £8 million. A portion of this was forward-funded by the members, who 'loaned' the Cohousing Company up to 30% of the projected total cost of their homes to help buy the site and provide development finance. Additional finance came from a loan via the ethical lender, Triodos Bank, which helped to provide bridging finance, covering the initial funding gap and allowing construction work to start, reaching a peak overdraft of around £4million. As each home has been completed the members have paid the rest of the purchase cost, either from savings or via mortgages offered by the Ecology Building Society (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 7).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points – **here** (Self Build Portal, 2013a).

### Springhill Cohousing - Independent

Springhill Cohousing in Stroud, Gloucestershire, was the first new-build cohousing scheme to be completed in the UK.

Co-designed with architects Architype, the group were able to procure housing on a steeply sloping site in the centre of the town, not immediately attractive to a mainstream housebuilder. The award winning scheme (Stevens, 2013a) features a total of 35-units comprising a variety of dwelling types, including flats, terraces and semi-detached homes in a largely car free development (NaSBA, 2011b, pp. 8–9)<sup>25</sup>, opting for a system of narrow pedestrian streets that was crucial in unlocking the potential of the site for housing development (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 54).

Springhill's cohousing creates a unique collective lifestyle: the residents cook meals together at least four-times a week, and there are regular coffee mornings, sing songs, tai chi groups, films, parties and group celebrations (Stevens, 2013a) in the common house, which forms a core component of the Cohousing agenda. Representing the hub of the community and a communal extension to the residents' private living space, the three-storey building comprises communal kitchens, dining, workshops, a games room and communal laundry facilities. The collective living spaces allow larger one-off events to be held in the common house, and private dwellings to be smaller, and cheaper (Stevens, 2013a).

The Cohousing ethos extends to other aspects of the development. Residents of the scheme are committed to reducing their environmental impact. There are community recycling and composting schemes, and much of the site's electricity is generated with photo-voltaic solar arrays. While many residents own cars, cars are kept away from the interior of the site, and a car-sharing scheme is in operation for more-occasional motorists.

The ownership model is aimed at creating the most equitable distribution of housing costs. In exchange for an initial £5,000 equity stake, every Cohousing group member was made a director of a special purpose 'Development Company', ensuring all members were equally involved in commissioning the construction.

The Development Company purchased the land together, ensuring that individual plot costs were kept relatively low. The plots were priced on a £/m<sup>2</sup> basis, so each resident pays according to the size of their house. The value of each square metre was defined as a division of the total build cost, *including* the common house, services, landscaping. This prevented the build from running out of money before the common house and the landscaping were complete.

Built with a £4.2m loan – some homes were purchased outright, whilst others remain for rent. Typically, each home has cost a little less than similar homes nearby (Stevens, 2013a). The cohousing

group also makes a commitment to providing affordable housing, and three housing units are subsidised in perpetuity at 15% below market value (Hunter, 2012, pp. 108–110).

### Ashley Vale, Bristol - Independent

Procured by the Ashley Vale Action Group (AVAG), established to resist what it saw as a problematic development proposed by a volume housebuilder, the Ashley Vale scheme consists of 26 new detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows as self build and self finish, with a shared garden, Home Zone, recycling facility, three workspace units and a community room (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 5).

Bounded by railway lines, allotments and a nature reserve, the scheme was enthusiastically supported by the local authority as an alternative to the volume housebuilder proposals. The scheme was built over five or six years on a former scaffolding yard close to the centre of Bristol, and has won numerous planning and urban design awards (Stevens, 2013e), including a Building for Life Award (NaSBA, 2011b, p. 8), and a CABE award in 2010 for its urban design and sustainability credentials (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 5) which acknowledges its *distinct character with a mix of scales, architectural styles and materials, and pleasant public spaces*, adding that for a city site [the scheme] *has a rural feel* (CABE, 2011a).

The group of around 30 families raised the deposit for the site between them, before dividing the site into individual plots (Parvin et al., 2011b, p. 54; Stevens, 2013e), whilst typical homes cost less than £100k (Stevens, 2013e), whilst average serviced building plots cost £35,000 (in 2001) (NaSBA, 2011b, p. 8). The self-finish options accessed cost savings of around 20% of the total cost (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 17).

A recent quality of life survey shows people are happier and feel safer in the self-built neighbourhood of Ashley Vale when compared to the wider city of Bristol, attributable to the social value of neighbourliness generated through self-provision (Clarke, 2012 IN: ; Moulding, 2012, p. 33).

The LLDC have written a synopsis of Ashley Vale on p.22 of their report *Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* (Roberts, 2012, p. 22).

Read a CABE case study of Ashley Vale, including lots of pictures, descriptions of the site and design process, and evaluation (CABE, 2011a).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points (Self Build Portal, 2013b).

The Ashley Vale Action Group have written a comprehensive account of their experience of community planning and consultation days (Leach et al., 2000).

### The Threshold Centre, Dorset - Independent

Created jointly with housing association, Synergy Housing, this project provides 14 cottages of mixed tenure – some for co-ownership, some for rent (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 7) - grouped around an old barn, which has been converted into a common house, supporting a lifestyle for residents based on Cohousing values.

The project was facilitated by strong local authority support and a grant from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), with the authority keen to support another Cohousing project in the area. The partnership appears to have been very successful, with anecdotal evidence suggesting that the group were very positive about the involvement of the Synergy HA as the development partner (Hill, 2013c).

### Holy Island of Lindisfarne Development Company Trust (HILDCT) - Independent



The Holy Island of Lindisfarne Development Company Trust (HILDCT) is a well-established Community land Trust (CLT), formed in 2000 in response to the severe shortage of affordable housing for local Islanders. The Development Company Trust was formed in order to purchase land and procure housing which could then be sold or rented to local people (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 56).

The HILDCT began as an Independent Group Custom Build, and transitioned to Supported Community Custom Build for a second phase. The first development was procured with financial support from the Tudor Trust and a mortgage from the Triodos Bank, which it paid back through rent charged on the dwellings constructed.

A second scheme, referred to as Green Lane, was begun in 2009 and developed with support from the Four Housing Group (4HG) Housing Association, in the form of Project Management services and a Clerk of Works on site, and by underwriting the Trust and enabling it to receive a loan for a third of the development cost from the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), the first such instance of a grant being paid by the HCA to a CLT. Further finance was again secured from Triodos Bank, and paid back through rent from tenants, whilst the final third of development costs were met by a grant from the Tudor Trust (Peacock, 2011).

The HILDCT won an award for Rural Housing from the HCA in 2010 (Peacock, 2011).

### Coin Street Community Builders - Independent

Coin Street Community Builders have developed a mixed-use community in the heart of London where innovative social housing developments, commercial and cultural organisations exist side by side (CABE, 2011b).

Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB) was established, in 1981, by members of the local community who were fighting to have control over their neighbourhood, the residential elements of which were threatened by office development. They won planning permission for five housing co-ops, commercial and leisure facilities and open spaces for the community. Due to CSCB's vision and determination Coin Street is now a thriving mix of social housing, businesses and public spaces that have been delivered as a long term project by and for local people (CABE, 2011b).

The original blueprint is still being followed by CSCB today, and so far four out of the five housing co-ops and a neighbourhood centre have been built. Open spaces and parks have also been established. Another housing co-op will be developed specifically for older residents and a swimming pool will be built in the near future (CABE, 2011b).

Read a CABE case study of Coin Street Community Builders, including lots of pictures, background to the development process, and evaluation –(CABE, 2011b).

### Hockerton Housing Project – Independent

Completed in 1998, five families built a terrace of earth sheltered homes with a 'green' off-grid solution as the main design driver. The families worked collectively to build the shells, before finishing their own homes independently, at a total cost of around £90k per home. A second phase of seven new homes is planned for 2013 and 2014 (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 5; and; Stevens, 2013e).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points (Self Build Portal, 2013c).

### Findhorn Foundation, nr. Forres, Scotland - Independent

The Findhorn Foundation represents one of the earliest self-build communities in the UK having constructed 44 homes over a 30-year period (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 5; Stevens, 2013e), beginning in the late 1980s with a small area of eco-housing known as the Bag End Cluster, built to what is still a very high ecological standard (Selfbuild Central, 2009).

Most homes were developed individually with a 'green' agenda, although a recent project resulted in a terrace of three homes constructed together. The new homes form part of a larger community, and have won an award from the United Nations (Stevens, 2013e).

Designers, Eco Arc, have also recently completed work on the Lancaster Cohousing scheme (Selfbuild Central, 2009).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points (Self Build Portal, 2013d).

Selfbuild Central has an illustrated case study (Selfbuild Central, 2009).

### D & O Management Services Ltd. – Developer

D&O Management Services Ltd are a private sector organisation that typically recruit people who already have good construction skills and don't require much training or support (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 10, p.10). The company then assists them in building their own homes, typically establishing a specific Self Build Housing Association for each scheme comprising recruited project members, whom it continues to assist post completion. The Housing Association effectively becomes a one-off development company. Perhaps unusually, the developer pays consideration to the mix of group members, stating that they '*recruit the best possible mix of members who will one day be neighbours and part of [the] community*'<sup>26</sup>.

D&O also retain a range of expertise 'in house' to facilitate design and procurement, including architectural design, and project management, that helps to 'de-risk' self-build in the eyes of lenders and planning authorities. In addition, the company negotiates and arranges the finance for the project, as well as identifying a suitable site and negotiating its purchase on behalf of the Association. The company state that these services, as well as the support they provide in terms of auditing each project using their in-house Quantity Surveyor, greatly assist in 'de-risking' self-build from the point of view of lenders and planning authorities – with a complete breakdown of the actual costs of the scheme at the outset of the project providing an estimate of the property value on completion. The company also undertakes all the necessary work of sorting out the technicalities of a housing development including VAT arrangements, certification and a Surveyor's inspections, and arranging project insurance which includes Contractors All risk, Public Liability, Personal Accident and Life Insurance.

When the scheme is completed, each member purchases their new home with mortgages under the advice and guidance of an Independent Financial Advisor<sup>27</sup>.

D & O place great emphasis on the importance of positive group dynamics in their model of Developer Enabled Custom Build, stating:

*"An ideal group has to be balanced with a mixture of skills and professions as well as complementary interests and attitudes. Many things are taken into account when allocating the membership of a scheme. You obviously need skilled tradesmen however, equally important, there should be someone experienced at administration and book-keeping. Group members come from a variety of professions and walks of life but they each have something to offer to the success of the project.*

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<sup>26</sup> (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013a)

<sup>27</sup> (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013a)

*Seems like a good idea? It is!! But it needs experienced, professional guidance to ensure success and that's where D & O Management Services Limited come in."*

(D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013b)

D & O appears to have a rich and proven track record, delivering a number of successful completed schemes, typically between 10 and 20 units in size, although the largest consists of 35 units. In addition, schemes are built quicker than anticipated, with almost every scheme completed in under 12 months, and representing a typical cost saving of 30-40% on market value. In some cases, a cost saving of over 50% has been compared to market value (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013c).

The D & O Management Services Ltd schemes show considerable innovation and adaptability in how they bring forward development on a wide range of otherwise challenging sites upon which normal, speculative development was unfeasible or simply unlikely.

The Colton Self Build Ltd scheme in Leeds was developed in a sensitive planning context on a sloping site unattractive to larger developers, whilst a scheme at Tong successfully took on an old dairy farm in a strict conservation area. Further schemes were delivered as part of a larger housing development, usually the first phase, alongside national house-builders as part of housing estate development initiated by local authority through land allocation. In some cases, D & O Management Services Ltd acquired sites from large developers who did not see a future for a site they owned if it were to be developed speculatively (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013c).

Construction, however, is generally very traditional, with limited sustainability credentials over and beyond that required by building regulations.

NaSBA have written an overview of D&O's 35-unit Sapley Self Build project at Heaton in Bradford (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 10).

Visit the D & O Management Services website (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013a).

Read about all of D & O Management Services completed projects (D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013c).

## O & H Developments - Developer

O&H started its corporate life in the construction and sale of residential apartments and houses in London, but has also facilitated a small number of serviced self-build plots as a master-developer in larger developments, with a design code and links to small builders, kit home suppliers and enabling project managers (NaSBA, 2011a, p. 9).

## LILAC, Leeds - Supported

The Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) initiative in Leeds is an example of the public sector assisting an otherwise independent group.

LILAC is a pioneering project that has delivered a community of 20 homes on redundant school site close to Leeds city centre, with a strong 'green' and affordable agenda, recently completed at the time of writing. The project has already received high-profile visits from Self-Build Industry Champion, Kevin McCloud and current Housing Minister Mark Prisk (UK Cohousing Network, 2013), testament to the important precedent it sets for the capacity of independently-led, group self-provided housing projects to deliver sustainable affordable housing in partnership with local authority and central Government.

The project took six years from inception to completion, and has been built to high ecological standards using off site manufacturing principles, namely the Modcell system of panel-based straw-bale construction. The self builders helped make up the pre-fabricated wall panels, then a main contractor was hired to assemble these and complete the main construction work (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 13).

The new homes are owned and managed by a fully mutual co-operative housing society – known as a Mutual Home Ownership Scheme (MHOS) - which ensures rents are fair and makes ownership affordable, and are built around a community 'common house' designed with shared cooking, laundry, leisure and meeting facilities (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 13), which forms a core component of the Cohousing ethos around which the group was formed (Cohousing.org, 2013).

Each resident has a lease that gives them a say in the management of the MHOS. Under the terms of the lease, members pay an equity stake to the co-operative and retain equity in the scheme. After deductions for maintenance, insurance etc, these payments pay the overall mortgage for the whole development. The amount each resident pays every month and the number of equity stakes they hold depends on how much they earn. Monthly payments are set at around 35% of each resident's net income (NaSBA, 2013a, p. 13).

The development was self-funded by its members with assistance from the Department for Energy and Climate Change. Leeds City Council has also supported the project by offering the group a deferred purchase option on a former school site in its ownership (Greenland, 2013), whilst the Homes & Communities Agency provided £420k in financial support to fund the clean-up of the site (Stevens, 2013e).

The LLDC have written a synopsis of LILAC on p.22 of their report *Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* (Roberts, 2012, p. 22).

## Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) - Supported

The Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) is a 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation with a long history of supporting community 'self-build'.

CSBA schemes are intrinsically affordable housing projects, and they often involve long term unemployed people who receive training and learn useful skills that may help them get future work. The downside is that the support and training they sometimes need can mean that there are limited cost savings (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 10).

The CSBA has completed a number of projects around the UK since its foundation in 1989 (Community Self Build Agency, 2013), including the Mia Court scheme at Ryecroft in Essex (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 12), with the Warden Housing Association<sup>28</sup>. A significant number of schemes completed throughout the 1990s involved the architectural practice, Architype, which developed expertise in assisting Supported Community Custom Build projects through the facilitation of co-design with groups and supporting training initiatives.

### ... with the Accord Housing Group

Pensnett Self Build at Swann Lane in the West Midlands was co-ordinated with the CSBA where the self build group fitted out the shells of 14 contractor constructed properties in partnership with Accord Housing Association (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 12) a Housing Association that supports community groups by supplying land, in-house design and project management services, finance and its off-site manufacturing capability (NaSBA, 2011b, p. 9).

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<sup>28</sup> Now operating as Home.

It is developing a co-ownership form of mutual tenure that will make it easier for groups to finance self build, self erect or self finish projects. It can deliver affordable self build schemes on land transferred at a discounted or zero value and has also used a 'sweat equity' development model to enable people to gain equity in the homes they build, up to a limit of 80% (NaSBA, 2011b, p. 9).

#### ...with Homes for Heroes, Bedminster, Bristol

More recently, the CSBA has coordinated the West Street project in Bedminster, Bristol, which provides 14 two bedroom homes for former servicemen and has been supported by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), Knightstone Housing Association and Bristol City Council. Completed in 2012, ten of the residents were involved in the construction work, which was managed by lead contractor Leadbitter (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 10) and there are plans for further Supported Community Custom Build schemes that involve ex-servicemen in their procurement and construction, addressing significant homelessness amongst returning servicemen and providing access to training in construction skills and long term employability in civilian society.

#### Walter's Way, Honour Oak Park, London Borough of Lewisham

Walter's Way is perhaps the most famous 'group self-build' project (Walter Segal Self Build Trust, 2013a).

In the mid-1970s, the London Borough of Lewisham decided - by one vote - to experiment with the now famous Segal method of self-build construction on pockets of land too small, awkward or sloping, to fit its own building programme. Although two and a half years of delay followed, due to difficulties in integrating the 'non-standard' development model with standard ways of financing, providing or controlling buildings, the project is widely acknowledged for its positive outcomes for the majority of those involved (Ward, 1995).

The LLDC have written a synopsis of Walter's Way on p.21 of their report *Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* (Roberts, 2012, p. 21).

#### Angell Eco Self Build (AESB), Brixton, London, UK.

Angell Eco Self Build (AESB) is a self build group that carried out a ten house build in partnership with Lambeth Council, Presentation Housing Association, Lambeth Council, Higgins Construction and Mode 1 Architects, and with support and advised from the CSBA. The houses are situated in South London, in Angell Town, Brixton (Community Self Build Agency, 2011).

The group consisted of ten households with between three to six people per family and a total of twenty five children. All of these households were in housing need and are overcrowded, and 94% of the adults on the scheme were from black and ethnic minority backgrounds (Community Self Build Agency, 2011)

It created a sustainable community of highly motivated people, personal and social capacity by education and training in building and other practical skills, as well as teamwork (Community Self Build Agency, 2011).

This creative and innovative scheme began building in April 2005 with the foundations, shell and 1st fix work carried out by the contractor, Higgins Construction. The self-builders then followed on site in February 2006 to carry out the 2nd fix work of carpentry, decorating, kitchen fitting and tiling and completed shortly before Christmas in December 2006 (Community Self Build Agency, 2011).

Read more about the Angell Eco Self Build project (Community Self Build Agency, 2011) (London21.org, 2013).

### CSBA schemes involving Architype<sup>29</sup> - Diggers Self Build, Hedgehog Housing Cooperative and others.

A number of other significant schemes – involving the CSBA and architects Architype - are listed by the Walter Segal Self Build Trust including the All-Hands project in Bromley, Marks Tey in Colchester, Chinbrook Meadows, Peckham Consortium Self-Build and two-phases of the Fusions Jameen project in London<sup>30</sup>.

Historically - and along with Walter's Way in Lewisham - the Diggers Self Build<sup>31</sup> and Hedgehog Housing Cooperative<sup>32</sup> projects represent the most widely-known 'supported community self-build' group projects. Both relied heavily on the involvement of the CHISEL and South London Family Housing Associations, a self-build enabling role played by architects Architype, and a Self-Build-To-Rent model of tenure.

The Diggers Self Build project represents a self-provided-for-rent neighbourhood procured by a Housing Association but with strong involvement of users (members of a residents' co-op) in design, planning and construction, using the Segal construction method (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 56).

The Hedgehog Housing Co-Op project began 1996 when a group of ten local families (who were all without permanent housing) worked with the council and the CBSA to construct some simple timber framed properties. All the homes are for rent, at a discounted level to reflect the work the self builders put in (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 10). The project has been featured on *Grand Designs*.

Darwin Road, in Tilbury, London represents an example of self-provision-for-rent with training. Although procured by a Housing Association, the development offered local people the opportunity to train and achieve construction qualifications while constructing a home, which they then went on to rent, thus combining investment in both physical and social benefits (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 56). This project enabled ten young unemployed people to build their own homes and also provided NVQ training. The scheme, which was supported by New Essex Housing Association, helped several of the self builders find paid work (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 12).

Read about the Community Self Build Agency on the Spatial Agency database (Awan et al., 2011).

Browse Community Self Build Agency projects –(Community Self Build Agency, 2013).

### Cornwall CLT Ltd and Cornwall Unitary Authority - Supported

Cornwall CLT Limited (CCLT) is a charitable organisation established in 2007 to provide good quality affordable housing to meet local needs either directly or by assisting local community land trusts to become established (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a).

CCLT was established as part of the Cornwall Community Land Trust Project set up and hosted by Cornwall Rural Housing Association, and is run by a voluntary Board of Management, employing one full time member of staff. The Cornwall Rural Housing Association continue to provide additional administrative support (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a).

Since 2007, CCLT has facilitated the delivery of affordable housing for key workers in a number of localities around Cornwall, including the St Minver CLT and St Just-in-Roseland CLT. These key schemes described on the website of the Cornwall Rural Housing Association (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013b) and the Self Build Portal (Self Build Portal, 2013e).

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<sup>29</sup> See (Architype, 2013)

<sup>30</sup> See (Walter Segal Self Build Trust, 2013b)

<sup>31</sup> See (Architype, 2013; Walter Segal Self Build Trust, 2013c)

<sup>32</sup> See (Architype, 2013; Bradshaw, 2013; Grand Designs Revisited, 2001; Selfbuild Central, 2013)

It is worth noting that the CCLT programme has considerable political support in Cornwall Unitary Authority, who maintain a £2-4million revolving loan fund to finance self-provided housing schemes within the county and are seen as pace-setters in supporting community-led housing development (Stevens, 2013e). Community-development expert, Stephen Hill, points out that the Community Land Trust mechanism is key was key in enabling elected members to support self-provided housing initiatives, as it ensured there is a mechanism to protect the land in perpetuity (Hill, 2013c).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study of the St Just-in-Roseland CLT, covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points (Self Build Portal, 2013f).

## Isle of Anglesey County Council - Supported

NaSBA describe the initiative enabled by the Isle of Anglesey County Council as:

*“Originally launched in 2005, nineteen subsidised plots have been made available in Anglesey thanks to a scheme that is supported by the local county council and a rural housing association.*

*All 19 plots have now been sold, and most of the homes are now completed. To ensure the whole project looks consistent the council employed a local architect to come up with a ‘pattern book’ range of different sized homes. The self-builders select one of these, but can then tweak the design and layout to suit their specific needs. The architects also help manage the work once the self-builder gets on site.*

*In addition to the cost of the plot all of the self-builders are required to pay £3,000 towards the cost of architectural services, planning and building control and administrative costs.*

*Typically, self-builders could obtain a plot for around a quarter of its normal value, at around £16,500. The council then ‘held’ a legal charge on the remaining 75% of the value of the plot, and if the self builder moved on and sold their home they had to pay back 75% of the land value to the council.*

*By helping families get over the initial financial hurdle of funding a building plot the project has shown how public sector bodies can help deliver affordable homes for local people. The plots are only available to people who have lived locally for at least five years, and they were carefully allocated by the housing association to those that would benefit the most.”*

(NaSBA, 2013a, p. 16)

## Homeruskwartier District, Almere, Netherlands – International

The Homeruskwartier District in Almere, Netherlands, is the largest self-build experiment in the world. The 100-hectare site to the south west of the city was reclaimed from the sea in the 1950s, and has since been masterplanned by the local authority into a four self-build districts of around 750 self-build plots per district. By early 2012, around 1000 homes had been completed (Hunter, 2012, p. 107; Stevens, 2013e) over a three-year period, an achievement due in no small part to the proactive approach adopted by the local authority in terms of leadership, and by the local mayor in particular (NaSBA, 2013b, p. 6).

Whilst of considerable scale, the initiative in Almere can be categorised as Enabled Self Build within the Supported Community Custom Build definition, as the local authority has adopted the specific enabling strategy of making plots available directly to individuals and self-providing groups.

At Almere, the definition of self-build is quite broad, and includes a relatively low proportion of ‘DIY self-builders’ alongside an established supply chain to serve the self-provided market, which includes



architects, kit home firms and contractors familiar with, and equipped to service the demand and provide lots of options, and many offer fixed price deals offering greater certainty to self-builders and lenders (Stevens, 2013d).

There is also an area master-planned specifically for housing developers, who assemble groups of people who want to live in cheaper, higher density typologies, like apartment blocks. Forming groups allows residents to build at higher densities and extract even greater savings from the land. One group of 25 self-providers formed a company and hired an architect to design a block of flats together. This enabled them to build their flats for around £70,000 each including land (Hunter, 2012, p. 107).

The local authority installs the infrastructure for the whole district: roads, street furniture and utilities. Each plot comes a building passport, which acts as a building permit, preventing the need for formal planning permission. This specifies any restrictions placed on development on that particular plot, such as the height, any gaps required between homes, and the line of the front and the back of the properties. Beyond this, the owners are allowed to indulge their own creativity. While this may sound like a recipe for disaster, many commentators have been impressed with the architectural diversity:

*“...the amazing thing is it is a fabulous place. A place full of people and families who want to build a bespoke home based on their own requirements, and a place where the residents share resources and knowledge from day one. Some of the homes are self-built, but most are built by main contractors with an architect in tow for people who are too busy or don't have the skills to build it themselves. Yes, some of the homes are 'expressive, unusual and individual', but as a collective place they work. They are not a product of 'the system' they are above it, beneath it – hell, they've bypassed it.”*

(Urban Self Build, 2012)

Although homeowners are free to build whatever they please, the majority of homeowners build quite contemporary homes, typically out of brick. A large proportion of self-providers have also chosen to build kit-homes (Hunter, 2012, p. 107). The early indications are that Homeruskwartier has been very successful. And has attracted worldwide attention. Like the UK, the housing market in the Netherlands is in a depression, with the volume-housebuilders' producing relatively low volumes of housing. Despite this, the self-provision in Almere has continued to build houses at greater volumes, and seems to be weathering the financial storm far better than the private sector (Self Build Portal, 2013g).

The Self Build Portal has a case study of the Homeruskwartier in Almere, NL, including site history, planning and construction arrangements, finance and long-term outcomes (Self Build Portal, 2013g).

The LLDC have written a synopsis of Homeruskwartier in Almere, NL on p.19 of their report *Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* (Roberts, 2012, p. 19).

The satellite and internet-based TV channel, Selfbuilder TV, has a feature on Almere, which can be viewed (Hutchinson, 2012)

Read about the important lessons to be learned from Almere, including finance, planning and operating at scale, on p.15 in *Laying The Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England* (DCLG, 2011b, p. 15).

See the slides from Ted Stevens' presentation at EcoBuild 2013, 'How they do large-scale self build in the Netherlands' (Stevens, 2013d).

## Baugemeinschaften, Germany - International

### Baugruppen - General

Germany has a cultural tradition of self-provision through building co-operatives that appears far more prevalent in contemporary society than in the UK.

The city of Berlin in particular is currently experiencing a surge in co-housing communities and communal living groups (Stryker-Härtel, 2007), springing from roots in the Commune Movement, which saw building cooperatives form, firstly, in the late 1960s as an expression of a political motivation, and later more generally motivated by the opportunity to reduce living costs and by the benefits of multi-generational housing (Chan, 2010a, pp. 16–20).

Developers - sometimes led by architects and other design professionals - and communities have been working together to reduce building cost by cutting out the middle-men when designing new neighbourhoods (BBC Two, 2013). Where no satisfactory, affordable property is available, independent citizens are taking matters into their own hands and forming building co-ops (Chan, 2010b, p. 72), often called *Baugruppen* (building groups), or *Baugemeinschaften* (building communities) to collectively self-provide multi-unit schemes, often in the form of apartment blocks that respond to a particular housing need or design goal such as multi-generational living or low energy usage.

A particular demographic in the city – where birth rates and marriage rates are low, the average age of the population is increasing and 95% of the population rent – is seeing the working-age demographic invest in their retirement plan by self-providing housing in a transition from rental to the security of ownership (Chan, 2010b, p. 48).

These cooperatives have clear advantages when compared with conventional real estate development. Buildings of the same or better quality, procured as *Baugruppen*, cost as much as 25% less per unit (up to 40% less per m<sup>2</sup>) (Chan, 2010b, pp. 42–46) compared to purchase from real estate developers, by-passing the costs and accrued interest usually added to the base build-cost of the scheme to cover advertising during the marketing phase, property acquisition taxes and general profit- and risk-based surcharges ('developer's profit').

Members of co-housing groups are also able to get a customized, ecologically optimal house that includes community spaces they have helped design, all in cooperation with others who also care deeply about the project, and for less money – at the wholesale price (Stryker-Härtel, 2007). In some cases – such as schemes with aspirations for low-energy usage – there are Government subsidies available that translate into low-interest development loans and mortgages available through relatively mainstream banks., such as KfW and GLS Bank (Chan, 2010b, pp. 49–50)

*Baugemeinschaft* often form around specific agendas – for example, the *Muggelhof* is for elderly women; *Möckernkiez* is led by a group that all have children with some form of disability and specialist learning or mobility needs; *Zur Bose* is a group who preference mixed use live/work units; and *Solar Klima* is the first Passivhaus block from a group with a strong green agenda (Stevens, 2013c).

The *Baugruppen* model is also observed in the largely self-provided developments in Quartier Vauban, Freiburg, and Tübingen-Südstadt. Similarly to Almere, an eco-system of support agents has developed in response to the demand –for example, the *WohnPortal Berlin* web-resource provides an 'interface for creative self-organization in Berlin and Brandenburg...to network diverse urban actors, together approaches to sustainable urban development and innovative forms of housing to be developed' (Wohnportal Berlin Gbr, 2013a), whilst there are also supporting companies, like *SmartHoming* (SmartHoming, 2013), that 'hand-hold' groups through the development process, helping with legal form, building warranty and arbitrating services.

### Example: Quartier Vauban, Freiburg, Germany

Quartier Vauban is located 3 miles to the south of central Freiburg, and on 35 hectares, now provides homes for around 5,000 people, constructed between 1993 and 2006 (Stevens, 2013e).

Led and supported by the local authority, large plots at in Quartier Vauban, Freiburg, were sold to and co-developed by *Baugruppen* according to strict performance guidelines. Though often lauded as an example of sociable and ecological urban design, the self-provision engine which drove much of the development is often overlooked (Parvin et al., 2011b, p. 55) in this innovative development where the owners secured custom built homes and cost savings of about 25% through a broad spectrum of self-build and self-finish options (Self Build Portal, 2013h).

Freiburg is often described as the most sustainable city in Europe, and Collective Custom Build - and self-finish - homes were a key ingredient (Stevens, 2013e).

Read a CABE case study of Vauban, including lots of pictures, background to the development process, and evaluation (CABE, 2011c)

### Example: Tübingen-Südstadt, Germany

The housing market is tight. Families are increasingly priced out by buy-to-let for student rental, and the loss of families and middle income groups to surrounding villages is perceived as a persistent problem (CABE, 2011d).

In 1990 the French military decided to leave its base in the Südstadt. This offered a welcome opportunity for the municipality to develop the 65ha brownfield site as a mixed-use urban quarter, which was to provide space for 6,500 inhabitants and 2,000 workplaces. In 2006 the project is nearing completion, with 1,100 residential units built so far, accommodating a population of 3,600 (CABE, 2011d).

Tübingen is a university town 80km south of Stuttgart. Its population is 87,000 and has been growing for a long time, mainly due to in-migration. A further 8,000 inhabitants are expected by 2020. In Germany the quarter is widely known for its strong and vital community, its distinct urban character and a vibrancy which is unusual for new-build developments. These characteristics are primarily attributed to an innovative development process in which land is acquired and assembled by the municipality and then sold to building partnerships, groups of usually 5-30 parties (individuals, flatshares, couples or families) who themselves commission an architect and a contractor with the design and construction of their homes. Thus no private developer is involve, resulting in significant cost savings. The concept was unique at the time but has now been imitated by a number of other municipalities such as Kassel, Freiburg, Trier and Hamburg." (CABE, 2011d).

Read a CABE case study of Tübingen-Südstadt (CABE, 2011d)

The LLDC have written a synopsis of Tübingen-Südstadt on p.20 of their report *Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park* (Roberts, 2012, p. 20)

Read more about the Phenomenon of Baugruppen in Winnie Chan's thesis from the Dessau Institute of Architecture, including a variety of case studies (Chan, 2010a)

Read about the pros and cons of Baugruppen, including case studies, at Winnifired-Härtel's web-page (Stryker-Härtel, 2007)

Wohnportal Berlin has a searchable database of projects (Wohnportal Berlin Gbr, 2013b)

## L'Espoir Molenbeek – Molenbeek, Belgium - International

The L'Espoir Molenbeek development is considered a pilot project in Belgium. Led by the equivalent of a Housing Association, the principal aim was the creation of affordable housing for 14 low-income families in a particular neighbourhood, based upon the guiding principals of citizen participation, sustainable architecture, and innovation in social housing provision – a 'third way' between classic social rents or direct help with housing acquisition.

As a pilot, the project depended upon innovative partnerships, delivering a timber-frame Passivhaus residential building of 14 duplex units over 4 storeys (7 with access to gardens; 7 with access to terraces), and is acknowledged for its unusually short construction time (completed in just under a year), good cooperation in the diverse design and construction team, and on-schedule delivery in 2010 with very few problems, 7 years after the idea was conceived.

A number of partnerships were needed to drive the project, including two housing associations already working in the area to support low-income families in accessing housing and a social credit agency, pooling resources from organisations that had very little in their own right. Residents also have access to a 'solidarity savings pot', allowing any member to draw on common resources to meet large expenditures, a key innovation highlighted in the self-providing group's extensive reflective account of their experience of building their own homes (L'Espoir Molenbeek, 2013).

Visit the L'Espoir Molenbeek webpage and read a comprehensive account of the project from the point of view of residents and the housing association -in Dutch (L'Espoir Molenbeek, 2013).

## Across the USA - International

There is significant precedent in the USA of collective custom build groups – usually associated with the cohousing movement – seeding community development on larger development sites (Hill, 2013d).

UK house-builders that also build in North America comment that they hardly ever build there, unless they have a pre-sale. This allows them to build to a high degree of customer choice in specification, and with the customer paying for construction as the work proceeds, profit margins are lower but more predictable – and housing development is hardly ever speculative.

Their business operations are thus much less dependent on cash flow requirements, quality is determined by the customer, and profit margins are lower but more certain and predictable. Land value is thus not used to cover the imperfections of the market to match product with buyer, or the inefficiencies of housing finance and construction in the way that it is in the UK.

In a presentation about Resident-Owned Communities in Europe and the USA as part of the Sustainable Self-Build and Renovation seminar stream at Ecobuild 2013, Stephen Hill highlighted the acknowledged value of cohousing groups in the development models used by US house-builders (Hill, 2013d).

## Fideicomiso, Buenos Aires, Argentina - International

*Fideicomiso* are legal trusts that have developed in Argentina to challenge models of conventional speculative housing development (CASS, 2013; Redstone et al., 2013). They also occur in other Latin American countries, and are sometimes more fully called *fideicomiso financieros* – or financial trust<sup>33</sup>. In Buenos Aires in particular, *fideicomiso* is so widespread it has become a common term for marketing and purchasing a particular type of apartment. It is perhaps the equivalent of purchasing an apartment 'off-plan' in the UK (Redstone, 2012).

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<sup>33</sup> See the Wikipedia entry for 'Fideicomiso' (Wikipedia, 2013)

The model has its roots in a kind of 'consortium' method of building houses that has long been part of Argentinean culture. In Argentina, it is relatively normal for someone to approach an architect and invest directly in the building of their own house – much more so than in the UK – and the knowledge of how to access housing in this way is part of popular culture there. The country does not have a mortgage-market or any form of credit-lines for procuring buildings and so 'normal' routes to financing housing acquisition from a UK perspective, are simply not available. Add to this the observation that following the 2001 financial crisis, trust in Argentina's banks is very low and real estate is seen as a safer investment. In the wake of this crisis, the development of *fideicomiso* saw entrepreneurial architects form groups of investors looking to build apartment blocks and engage in development with them as co-investors.

There are certainly some parallels between *fideicomiso* and models of collective self-provision of housing known in the UK – although the key difference lies in who initiates the project. Self-provided implies there is a community ready to build, while *fideicomiso* involves bringing people together. In terms of the UK context, commentators such as independent curator and researcher Elias Redstone believe that both approaches will be able to co-exist and complement each other.

*Fideicomiso* has had particular success in Buenos Aires, where the city's predominantly flat and standard-sized building plots of 8.66m x 15m and easily understood, light-touch planning and design codes mean that architects and co-investors can be relatively sure of what development will be permitted.

*Fideicomiso* has traditionally been accessed by higher-middle class citizens with the income and capital to invest in such a project. Although Sebastian Adamo – of Argentinean architectural practice, Adamo Faiden – states that individual user-requirements are often looser and easier to incorporate into a design than one-off commissions for luxury houses, rather than complexity being compounded by multiple voices. The relationship between architect and investor is different to that between architect and client. Seeing the project as an investment also means that build-times are relatively short (12-18months from inception), a characteristic partially attributable to the fact that the architect also leads the development. Whilst in the UK perhaps there is a perception that a great deal of time is needed for protracted negotiation and to establish where risk lies, the *fideicomiso* model means that from the start there is a strong buy-in to the design by users, who in part approach a particular architect for their brand - and as such already accept their detailed decisions beyond the minimums of floor area, location and key features such as balconies. The procurement process is quicker because – to some degree – the design is 'off-the-peg'.

Additionally, apartments are not always for user-occupation – some are sold on to finance literally 'higher architecture' – apartments, or 'houses in the sky' on the upper floors with bigger floor areas and more attention paid to detail than the smaller, market-sale units on the lower floors.

Architects working with *fideicomiso* almost seem to commit to a neighbourhood – if they are approached by someone who wants to build in a different neighbourhood, it is common for them to be referred to an architect-developer who is operating there. In this way, a circle of trust develops between architect-developers.

There is also an established culture of architects working entrepreneurially here - in part precipitated by the lack of the usual credit-lines for building procurement and associated broad spectrum of actors involved in real-estate investment, but also by the economic and political instability in Argentina, meaning investors need quick projects amidst changing circumstances.

### Quinta Monroy, Iquique, Chile - International

'Half and half' housing concept designed by Elemental Architects, Chile, whereby the basic house infrastructure is planned and built by a public organisation, leaving half of each plot available for gradual self-provision by the user (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 56).

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# 5 UNMET DEMAND

## FIRST-TIME BUYERS AND EMPTY-NESTERS WANT TO BUILD IN GROUPS

There is evidence of a huge, general aspiration amongst UK citizens to build their own homes (NaSBA and Ipsos MORI, 2013a; DCLG, 2011a, p. 14; Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3); an aspiration that can be qualified as well as quantified, and that - with the right kind of enablement and understanding of motivational factors for key stakeholders - has the potential to translate into effective demand<sup>34</sup> for Collective Custom Build in the UK housing market (Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16).

Although there is a historical precedent in the UK of self-provision lowering the threshold of access to housing for a wider range of people (Barlow et al., 2001, p. 15), at its current scale the 'self-build' housing market is widely regarded as meeting only the needs of older, more affluent households with relatively high levels of housing equity and/or high incomes, who typically build an individual, detached, one-off home (Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16; Barlow et al., 2001, p. 15).

As well as meeting the needs of more affluent groups of people seeking homes that support a particular lifestyle choice, enabled and assisted forms of Collective Custom Build could contribute significantly to fulfilling the central Government pledge to '*...create a self build revolution where building your own home is not just the preserve of the privileged few*'<sup>35</sup>, by removing cost and complexity barriers and lowering the entry threshold to home-ownership for lower and mid-income households.

### Evidence - Research & Figures

The Building Societies Association (BSA) suggest that between 50-70% of people would like to build their own home (Building Societies Association, 2011; IN Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16). In its more recent '*Lending Information for Self-Build in the UK*' report, the BSA goes on to state that:

*'...there is now reliable evidence of growing public demand for this type of housing which, if met, will enable the sector to grow significantly and in turn make a greater contribution to the number of new homes built across the country.'*

(Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3).

Central Government also acknowledges this unmet demand in its most recent *Housing Strategy*, citing the results of a YouGov survey over half of all respondents would be 'interested in doing a custom build':

*"There are over 100,000 people looking for building plots across the country and we know from recent market research that one in two people would consider building their own home if they could."*

(DCLG, 2011b, p. 14)

By the time of the publication of the HCA Custom Build Homes Fund Prospectus a few months later, this acknowledgement had generalised - in its ministerial foreword - to broadly state that '*most people*

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<sup>34</sup> In 'Build-It-Yourself?', Wallace et al. discuss the difference between the general aspiration to self-provide and an effective demand for opportunities to self-provide from customers ready and able to commit financially to self-provision (Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16).

<sup>35</sup> Former Housing Minister for the UK Government, Grant Shapps MP IN: (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 2).

*in the UK would build their own home if they had the chance*' (HCA, 2012, p. 3), a figure given more precisely as 53% by Housing Minister Mark Prisk, in his speech to the Council of Mortgage Lenders in 2012 - adding that two thirds of the people who want to build their own home want to within the next two years (Prisk, 2012).

More recent research undertaken by Ipsos MORI in January 2013 on behalf of the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) found that approximately 6 million people (1 in 8) in the UK expect to research how to build a home for themselves in the next 12 months, and around 1million (1 in 50) expect to make serious moves to act upon that research - such as purchasing a building plot, seeking detailed planning consent or starting construction work - during the same period (NaSBA and Ipsos MORI, 2013b).

Other sources cite figures of 400,000 people searching Rightmove - and 100,000 people using other plot-finding websites such as Zoopla - as evidence that significant numbers of people are interested in sourcing land for self-build in the UK (Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16).

Although evidence of demand for self-provision in general can be taken to some extent as demand for Collective Custom Build, Ted Stevens, Chair of the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) identifies specifically that - of those that want to build their own home - 1-in-4 would like to do it as part of a group (Stevens, 2013a). This could indicate that as many as 1.5million people, or almost 3% of the current UK population of 51 million people<sup>36</sup>, express an aspiration to self-provide housing through some form of Collective Custom Build.

## Profiling Collective Custom Builders

Whilst there is relatively little robust market research into the likely demographic profile of collective custom builders, there is some consensus anecdotally that those aspiring to provide their own homes, together, fall broadly into two categories:

*Older, more affluent households* - looking to build their dream home and unsatisfied with the prospects of long-term care and isolation associated with an ageing population; motivated by desire for an individual personalised home and by the security of owning a home that they can stay in for longer as they age; often asset-rich and commonly referred to as 'Empty-Nesters' or 'Baby Boomers'.

*Younger, less affluent households* - for whom access to housing is currently limited, and for whom motivation stems from economic need and the prospect of cost-savings resulting from working together.

Both profiles have an interest in building homes together as part of a collective development - rather than as individual, one-off homes - in order to meet some or all of their goals.

### Older, more affluent households - Asset-Rich 'Empty-Nesters' and 'Baby Boomers'

Wallace et al. observe that '*older, 'empty nest', existing homeowners on higher incomes*' are most likely to 'self-build' and list quantitative evidence – based upon average build costs for self-build and average house prices - that confirms this observation (2013a, p. 16). These households are described by the Building Societies Association as '*well capitalised married couples, many with no children, who are home owners aged between 35 and 54*' (2012, p. 8), often have '*higher-incomes, and/or high levels of housing equity to begin with*' (Barlow et al., 2001, p. 15) and are '*interested from the point of view of desire and future security*' - (Stevens, 2013b).

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<sup>36</sup> Figures are for those aged 15+ and eligible for Ipsos MORI's Capibus study (Ipsos MORI, 2013a). Population figures are derived from 2011 Census estimates. Calculation based on 25% of 6 million people aspiring to build their own home.

In particular, there is a growing interest in co-operative models of housing that support alternative lifestyles - such as cohousing<sup>37</sup> - from people that are asset-rich and concerned by a lack of 'neighbourliness' in society and by long-term prospects of isolation in old age. This type of household is also able to invest now in homes that may afford them a better quality of life in old-age in the context of a generally ageing population and anticipated future scarcity of local government resources.

Writing in The Guardian, Chief Executive of the Hanover Housing Association, Bruce Moore, describes a growing interest in co-operative housing options that '*involves older people forming communities, offering mutual support while maintaining a strong emphasis on independence*' (Moore, 2013a, ; also 2013b). Hanover are developing three cohousing projects with older people, and Moore goes on to add:

*"Baby-boomers do not want to live in old people's homes...the rise of personalisation across social care and healthcare needs to be matched by new attitudes to how we enable older people to make housing choices and be regarded as consumers rather than recipients of welfare."*

(Moore, 2013a)

There are a number of international examples where Collective Custom Build projects have been delivered for this type of group – especially in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany and the USA. In Barnet in North London a group of elderly women are building a 25-home mutually supportive retirement project in partnership with Hanover Housing Association (NaSBA, 2013, p. 13).

#### Younger, less-affluent house-holds - Young People and the 'squeezed middle'.

There is growing acknowledgement that building homes together is of interest to households who would normally be termed 'first-time buyers'; typically younger households, described by NaSBA Chair Ted Stevens as '*in their 20's, 30's or 40's...who often struggle to afford new homes...with budgets typically between £100–200k and who are driven by the opportunity to have a say in the home they really want and by the potential cost benefits*' (Stevens, 2013a) .

Faced with high levels of youth unemployment, stagnant wages and tuition fees, this generation of young people face different challenges to their parents. Although 88% of young people aged 18–30 want to own their own home in 10 years' time, in the wider context of high prices for homeownership and rentals, insufficient homes and rising living costs, homeownership is thought to be unattainable for a majority - and around 50% are thought to consider the prospect of home-ownership unrealistic (Pennington et al., 2012).

The definition of this demographic is expanded by the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) self-providing group as the 'squeezed middle' - key workers, or people trying to get a first foot on the housing market, not limited by age-range and who require 'intermediate housing' as a way to access long term sustainable housing, and who can't afford to buy on the open market (Interview with LILAC member IN: Neil and Iredale, 2013).

This type of collective custom builder are typically on a tight budget, and described by Wunderlich and Campbell as being likely to exploit the opportunity to invest 'sweat-equity' – managing the construction or doing some of the construction or fit-out work themselves - in order to bring costs down (Wunderlich and Campbell, 2013). They may also have young children - or be likely to have them in the near future - and want flexibility to expand their homes at a later date (Ibid. 2013).

Although Barlow et al. (2001) note that by the 1990s, the self-build sector had predominantly come to serve higher income households, it also describes the historic capacity of self-build to meet the needs of lower to mid-income households (Barlow et al., 2001, p. 15), confirmed by Duncan and Rowe (1993) who describe the significant role self-build can play for less affluent households.

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<sup>37</sup> Please refer to 'Alternative Development Models' in this study.

Analysis of the types of households served by a community self-build project in Bristol suggests that a wide range of budgets and property sizes were being met (Broer and Titheridge, 2010 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013a, p. 16), indicating that a Collective Custom Build has some potential to lower the entry threshold to self-provided housing for a wide range of people.

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# 6 ADDED VALUE

## THE ADDED VALUE ASSOCIATED WITH COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

By procuring housing through innovative enabling partnerships that include end-users and by placing use-value - rather than asset value - at the heart of decisions about the procurement of housing, alternative models of housing provision, like Collective Custom Build, offer an opportunity to generate value beyond merely an increase in housing supply, such as providing meaningfully affordable housing, strengthening local communities and economies and engaging people with an environmental agenda.

Whilst no single procurement route represents a panacea for a problematic house-building industry, as a form of self-provided housing Collective Custom Build has the potential to improve the quality, affordability, sociability and sustainability of housing, as well as offering greater certainty for the producer.

Chair of the National Self-Build Association, Ted Stevens, illustrates the benefits of self-provision in general as offering an opportunity to:

*“...provide affordable bespoke-designed market housing, promoting design quality and environmental sustainability [as well as] driving innovation in building techniques and entrepreneurialism...‘self-build’ [also] tends to be greener, as end-users invest in reducing the on-going running costs of their future homes, and it supports local economies as each self-built home spends around £50,000 on materials and supports an average of seven construction jobs for a year. It also gives people more choice and better value; and it makes housing affordable for a new generation.”*

(Stevens, 2013a).

Conversely, Parvin et al. describe the often intangible and difficult-to-evaluate costs attributable to poor housing supply - both in terms of quantity and quality - drawing attention to key issues such as:

*“ ... rising inequality, homelessness, poor health, time-poverty, depression and low self-esteem (even for the wealthy) are likely direct consequences [of such a poor housing supply]. It is easy to overlook these costs, because many of them are impossible to measure: how can the loss to a family be calculated when a parent has to commute for several hours per day, or see their children only at weekends? There are also indirect consequences arising from competition for housing, such as hamstrung local labour markets, or rising support for far-right political parties in white working class neighbourhoods.”*

(Parvin et al., 2011a, pp. 16–17)

Whilst these statements serve well as illustrations of the range of possible benefits of self-provided housing it can be difficult to articulate the added value of a particular type of housing delivery, like Collective Custom Build, over others, as value is often specific and contingent in relation to the context in which it is articulated.

Parvin et al. (2011a) go on to argue that the process through which houses are procured is as important as the outputs themselves, articulating the term ‘value architecture’ to describe the way that the direct users of housing procure long-term use value in their assets rather than merely short-term exchange value:

*“Every process by which housing might be procured has a basic ‘value architecture’: in the way that the design and procurement process structurally tends towards maximising certain kinds of value at different stages. In this context, the word ‘value’ expands to take in not just financial asset value (also known as ‘exchange value’), but also other forms of value, be they short-term, long-term, economic value, utility value, or other, less measurable value sets which*

*are nonetheless universally acknowledged, such as social status, a sense of belonging, or pride ... In order to understand housing, therefore, we need to understand the basic value-architecture of the processes by which housing might be produced.”*

(Ibid. 2011a, p. 23)

And illustrating a typical user-driven, use-value-based decision:

*“...a self-provider may also (inadvertently) make ‘irrational’ design choices which favour increased use-value ... In other words, as they design, the self-provider is not only calculating the cost of the project and protecting its long-term asset-value, but also imagining their home as a place to live. We’re human – we simply can’t help ourselves: “I really want big south windows because I like to sit in the sun.”... ‘I’m a guitarist, so I need somewhere to practice without disturbing the neighbours”...”*

(Ibid. 2011a, p. 30)

A self-provided value architecture, described by Parvin et al. as procuring long-term use value more effectively than a speculative house-building model of housing delivery that procures short-term exchange value, is structurally more able to deliver higher-quality, less energy-hungry dwellings that can achieve long-term affordability whilst also unlocking investment from self-providers themselves and supporting the development of functioning communities and a more resilient housing supply (Ibid. 2011a, pp. 22–35).

Added value, in this sense, is often discussed as ‘social value’ – defined by Social Enterprise UK as *“the additional benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”* – and is commonly related to concepts such as well-being, life-satisfaction and happiness, as well as to aspirations to increase the capacity for these afforded by society.

In *‘The Social Impact of Housing Providers’*, Fujiwara notes that there is evidence to suggest that people with higher well-being are more productive and creative at work, are more altruistic in that they are far more likely to give up their time to help others (both at work and in private life), and they also tend to be healthier, in that they are less likely to catch a range of different viruses and - even if they do - heal much quicker. These findings have important implications for health expenditures, absenteeism at work, productivity and economic growth and charitable giving – which are clearly important for any society – and housing provision, as both product and process, has huge capacity to deliver social value and societal well-being (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 45).

Pete Gladwell of Legal & General Property highlights why considering social value is of paramount importance to today’s housing industry and how understanding and reporting on the social value of housing providers’ activities can provide a starting point from which the social, financial and economic returns can be balanced and assessed:

*“The recent financial crisis has left many established investment paradigms in tatters, and yet provided fruitful ground for those who wish to seize this opportunity to reprioritise the purpose and values of the financial industry. The single-handed and relentless pursuit of short-term financial gain has been discredited and widely disparaged, but in turn governments have struggled to reassert social priorities on the world of finance ... those stewarding the pensions and investments of others [should] look more deeply than financial returns to assess how they are best able to deploy that capital to benefit society, in the fulfilment of their fiduciary duty. For an institution to have a Corporate Social Responsibility department tacked on is no longer enough - this requires social impact to be evaluated by every investment professional, in every investment decision.”*

(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 7)

Social Enterprise UK go on to observe that:

*“Whilst there are many examples of providers delivering social value available to illustrate this, there is no authoritative list of what these benefits may be. The reason for this flexible*

*approach is that social value is best approached by considering what is what beneficial in the context of local needs or the particular strategic objectives of a public body. In one area, for example, youth unemployment might be a serious concern, whilst in another, health inequalities might be a more pressing need.”*

Writing specifically about housing associations, Fujiwara observes that consideration of how social value can be generated through the provision of housing is needed – principally from providers of social housing - in order to meet the obligations presented by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012<sup>38</sup>. Fujiwara draws particular attention to methods of evaluating social value, such as Wellbeing Evaluation and Social Return on Investment, that seek to articulate social value in financial terms, in order to make it easier to consider in investment terms, and notes that there is a clear need for social value auditing to be considered by whole organisations, rather than just community investment teams, in order to provide key stakeholders in the housing industry with the information they need to balance competing demands for investment across their businesses.

### Higher Quality

Government acknowledges that self-build homes are often distinguished by their excellent quality and design (Prisk, 2012; UK Cohousing Network, 2013a), whilst Wallace et al. consider the current concentration of house-building into ever smaller numbers of firms to be problematic, as it does not deliver the necessary new supply in sufficient numbers, and typically produces poor housing design and poor customer satisfaction (2013, p. 17). Parvin et al. (2011a, p. 32) take space provision as a general indicator of ‘generosity’ and state that the average size of a self-provided home is significantly more generous than the UK new-build average<sup>39</sup>, whilst Barlow et al. also observe that self-provision results in houses which are generally of a higher-quality and larger size than speculative houses (Barlow et al., 2001).

Parvin et al. also note that the attention to the value of houses as places to live also translates into a greater interest in technical innovation, either in terms of services, construction materials or overall space design (2011a, p. 32), whilst self-providers also design for their individual family needs, which may include:

*“... highly customised provisions for, say, a disabled user, but also might include features that a speculative housebuilder would rarely provide, such as the ability to convert part of the house into an annexe, or a space for working or practicing a hobby.”*

(Ibid. 2011a, p. 34)

The Construction Industry Council acknowledges that self-builders are *likely to have a focus on the overall quality of their development including cost and performance in use and build quality* (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 16), which it describes in contrast to volume house-builders with ‘no particular interest’ in higher quality or faster build times (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 5).

A post-occupancy study of the Stroud Cohousing scheme<sup>40</sup> - the first new-build cohousing scheme in the UK, built in 2004 - by the Institute of Sustainability found that a Building Use Survey (BUS)<sup>41</sup> ranked

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<sup>38</sup> The Public Services (Social Value) Act was passed at the end of February 2012 and under the Act, for the first time, all public bodies in England and Wales are required to consider how the services they commission and procure might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. You can read a brief guide to the Act from Social Enterprise UK (Social Enterprise UK, 2012a), who have also produced a guide to implementing the Act (Social Enterprise UK, 2012b).

<sup>39</sup> “The average size of a self-provided home is 218m<sup>2</sup>. If we adjust this figure to take account of the fact that self-provided houses tend to be 3-4 bedroom houses (3.75 bedrooms on average), an equivalent 2.5 bedroom house would have an area of 145m<sup>2</sup>. That’s significantly more generous than the UK new-build average of 82.7m<sup>2</sup>.” (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 32 using data from Buildstore “Self build moving centre stage” (Buildstore, 2009) and the Italian Housing Federation “Housing Statistics in the EU” (Italian Ministry of Infrastructure, 2006))

<sup>40</sup> See (Architype, 2013).



the homes as the highest-ranking development in the BUS database at the point of survey. The scheme had relatively low carbon emissions when compared to UK benchmark and exhibited few thermal anomalies in the external envelope, indicating good build quality. Comments collected as part of the study also highlighted the residents' awareness of the shortfalls in construction, indicating a high level of forgiveness resulting from their involvement in the self-providing process (Pasquale, 2013).

Some sources also describe how a more diverse housing market would 'drive up quality' across the industry (Brinkley, 2013; Stevens, 2013b), illustrated by Parvin et al. (2011a, p. 34) as:

*"The presence of a large self-provided sector would, undoubtedly, drive the speculative market to compete more vigorously on quality. But recognising the potential in this paradigm shift, many of the existing large housebuilding companies will alter their business model to serve and profit-from the self-provided sector as much as compete with it. The transition from a speculative-housebuilding-only world to a more diverse range of housing models can therefore be gradual, competitive and surprisingly permissive."*

(Ibid. 2011a, p. 34)

### Better Performance

Whilst a well-established and industry-recognised definition of 'sustainable' already exists within the Code for Sustainable Homes (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 9), the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires a much more holistic consideration of the social, economic and environmental benefits of development, against which many collective self-build schemes can be considered as highly sustainable (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 9), typically placing value on reduced impact of the development as a whole.

The Lancaster Cohousing development, for example, places great emphasis on reducing reliance on individual ownership of vehicles and other products such as washing machines and lawnmowers (Self Build Portal, 2013a), illustrating the potential of collective forms of self-provision to '*reduce the amount of 'clutter' and unnecessary stuff that individual householders tend to acquire*'. (UK Cohousing Network, 2013b).

Wallace et al. point out, however, that environmental ideals may not be the prime motivator for all self-builders, citing the Office for Fair Trading's observation that meeting the requirements of the Code for Sustainable Homes was a burden for some self-builders (OFT, 2007 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17). However, it is likely that requirements will be much less onerous if access to support in meeting these requirements from planning and design professionals can be facilitated by some kind of enabling arrangement, either from a private developer, local authority or third-sector organisation.

However, the financial rewards for self-providers who build sustainably are still very tangible – in that, as users of the product being produced they benefit directly from investment in energy-saving measures such as higher-than-normal levels of insulation, passive-solar design and renewable technologies – and an aspiration to procure housing that supports a sustainable life-style is often a founding principal of Collective Custom Build Groups<sup>42</sup>.

### Long-term Affordability

One of the issues often framed as a benefit of self-provision is the lack of involvement by developers on a speculative basis, resulting in cost savings of around 20-30% due to the absence of 'developer's profit' - added to reward the developer for the risk of development. In self-provided models, this

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<sup>41</sup> See <http://www.busmethodology.org.uk/process/> for an overview of the BUS survey and its use in assessing the quality of buildings.

<sup>42</sup> See the LILAC project (LILAC, 2013; UK Cohousing Network, 2013a), Lancaster Cohousing (Jennings et al., 2012; Lancaster Cohousing, 2013; Self Build Portal, 2013a), and Ashley Vale self-build neighbourhood (CABE, 2011; Leach et al., 2000; Moulding, 2012; Self Build Portal, 2013b) among others.

reward is retained by the self-provider; and this can result in a more economic building or a building of much higher specification that would otherwise be affordable – or even a combination of the two. The Policy Exchange, for instance, argues that homes which might be put on the market for £220,000 by a developer could be “self-built” for £130,000 – with *the added bonus that they would be specially designed for the family which moves in* (Morton, 2013, pp. 4–5), and Parvin et al. (2011a, p. 33) describe how the overall cost of a self-provided home to the user can be significantly lower than an equivalent market home would be.

*“Although at present self-provided housing may be less cost-efficient in terms of pure construction, the overall cost of a self-provided home to the user is significantly lower than an equivalent market home would be, because there is no marketing cost, and no profit margin going to external shareholders. This means that even where the self-provider buys the land, the overall cost of the project is around a third less than the equivalent cost on the market. The financial cost of the project can also be massively reduced through users investing so-called ‘sweat equity’: taking on work which would otherwise have been paid for (whether it be project management or actual construction tasks) and doing it for yourself.”*

(Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33).

Some groups, such as the Ashley Vale Action Group, which procured a self-built neighbourhood at Ashley Vale, in Bristol, cite cost savings enabled through working together as a critical factor for the success of their project (Moulding, 2012, p. 35); whilst - in assessing the feasibility of delivering affordable housing at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park - the London Olympic Development Corporation (LLDC) found that Collective Custom Build housing could provide homes that are more affordable on a per-square-metre basis than developer-led speculative housing, by providing an avenue to homeownership for those who would not otherwise be able to afford to live in a given area, stating:

*“...encouragement and guidance of custom-builders to form co-operative groups could make custom-build more accessible, without creating different classes of housing or an ‘affordability’ threshold. Custom-build groups can acquire homes of greater value than they would as individual households, and for much less than the equivalent market value of each property.”*

(Roberts, 2012, p. 10)

Wallace et al. point out that UK and international reports suggest that individuals are motivated to self-build because they obtain a bespoke home that meets their individual needs and aspirations at a cost unavailable in the wider housing market (Brown, 2007; Building Societies Association, 2011; Dol et al., 2012; IN: Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 17–18), whilst an unpublished DCLG survey, cited by the Building Societies Association, National Self Build Association and current Housing Minister, Mark Prisk, found that one in two people see self-build as a less-expensive route into homeownership (Building Societies Association, 2011 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17).

Additionally, the potential for alternative ownership and land tenure arrangements, such as mutual home ownership<sup>43</sup> and community land trusts<sup>44</sup>, means self-provided housing can be intrinsically more affordable on a permanent basis (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33), principally by separating the cost of homes from the cost of the land they are built on.

Indeed, some models of Collective Custom Build have been developed to specifically address the issue of localised affordability, or rather, the lack of local, affordable homes. Providing affordable housing – and maintaining affordability in perpetuity – is a founding principle of some groups, such as the LILAC project in Leeds (LILAC, 2013), and the East London CLT initiative in Bow, east London (East London Community Land Trust, 2013), and the Building Societies Association notes that ‘self-build’ presents a particular opportunity to make housing affordable for a new generation of homeowners and ‘first time buyers’ (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3)

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<sup>43</sup> See ‘Popular Culture’ in this study.

<sup>44</sup> See (Parvin et al., 2011a, pp. 33–34) and ‘Popular Culture’ in this study.

This differentiates it from many of the 'affordable housing' mechanisms which we have relied on over recent years, such as shared ownership and shared equity schemes, many of which could be better described as 'the temporary mitigation of unaffordability' (Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33).

### Resilient Supply and Unlocking Investment

Parvin et al. point out that at a time when lending from banks is low, self-builders can actually give an extra boost to the housing supply (and wider economy) because of the capital they already own and bring to the project, including "the financial capital they bring through savings, mortgages, rent and sweat equity" and also the "individual and collective social and environmental capital"; their knowledge, their contacts, their determination to succeed and their commitment to a more sociable, sustainable lifestyle, which shapes the places they build (2011a, p. 33).

Drawing on evidence from multiple recessions (Barlow et al., 2001; IN: Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33), Parvin et al. also note that self-providers continue to build houses during periods of economic uncertainty:

*"Because speculative housing is built to sell, rather than to live in, it is a production process that more or less stops if the market falls. As such it is highly vulnerable to market volatility, and economic cycles of boom and bust. By contrast, self-providers are building to live in houses rather than sell them (even if they plan to sell at some point in the future) so generally they continue to build through economic downturns if they can."*

(Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33).

Parvin et al. also note the wider benefit to housing supply in the UK:

*"Even when these houses come to be sold to others, they are more generous and characterful, qualities which are highly desirable to prospective buyers in the secondhand market. The potential benefits [of a range of customised homes becoming part of the UK housing stock] which might accrue are not just to market quality, but also to the economy as a whole, if our dwellings become more generous providers of space, including spaces which are not strictly programmed for consumption, but useable for hobbies or new business ... [then] thousands more UK homes [might have] 'spare' workspace to support fledgling inventions and enterprises."*

(Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 34).

Wallace et al. (2013) cite a quote by Ambrose that describes how self-provision in groups, such as Collective Custom Build, can unlock housing development in the context of scarce resources:

*"[First] ... that if there is very little or no public money, then ingenuity and new practices have to the extent that is possible, to serve instead. The second is that if community and resident participation can be achieved, and if the people who have a direct interest in improving their homes and immediate environment can be drawn into the process, then the 'release' and organisation of individual and group energies can help to bring about desired outcomes even in periods of great financial stringency."*

(Ambrose, 1994, p. 192, IN:; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 18)

Collective Custom Build also has some value in tipping difficult sites into viability, and in turn increasing the volume of housing produced. Anecdotal evidence suggests that by securing a sale up front – by giving an option to a self-providing group on the first phase of a site – house-builders could seed the delivery of housing across the wider site with high-quality dwellings and an attractive, established community. Hill states that this is often that case in North America, where volume house-builders will hardly ever start building without a secured sale (Hill, 2013a) and Collective Custom Build groups such as Cohousing groups are beginning to see the value they offer to developers in terms of marketing, seeding a sense of community, identity and place that in turn helps to sell further phases of speculatively built houses (Hill, 2013b).

'Self-build' in general can also be the only solution in situations where speculative builders have withdrawn completely from the local market, as observed in Scotland by Clapham et al. (Clapham et al., 1993 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 17–18), and as is resolutely the case in the Middlehaven district of Middlesbrough, which formed the focus of an HCA Custom Build Workshop in January 2013 (HCA, 2013).

### 'Livable' Communities

As Parvin et al. note, building housing which supports strong community interaction has, for a long time, been a key objective in housing policy, but usually as a rhetorical addendum to housing policy, rather than a practical structuring mechanism for it (2011a, p. 33). Campaigns and organisations, such as Shelter, and the Campaign To End Loneliness note that housing provision has the capacity to support the development of community friendship ties that in turn play a qualitative role in improving the general quality of life, that can also generate quantifiable long-term savings in welfare spending: on crime, street maintenance, childcare and care of the elderly which result from the mutual support given by friends and neighbours.

*“One of the key structural weaknesses of the speculative housing delivery model is that because end-users have no role in the production process, it isolates them as individuals. Your neighbour is simply whoever you end up buying the house next-door to. Policymakers and architects have therefore been on a steep uphill struggle trying to support any community cohesion at all. They have tried to do so largely on the supposition that somehow the design of three-dimensional objects in a certain way can engender positive community interaction. To some extent it can, but speculative housebuilders are naturally cautious about taking unconventional design decisions that may help do this (such as creating no-car zones between front doors). Not knowing their buyer, they tend towards a lowest-common-denominator sales offer: high-security; high-privacy; clearly delineated ownership; minimum-effort access. Self-provided housing (particularly group self-provided housing or co-housing) forms relationships through the actual process of making a place, rather than expecting the product alone to engender community relationships in spite of the isolating procurement process. This also means that design questions can be negotiated, and users can co-design the kind of neighbourhood they want to live in.”*

(Parvin et al., 2011a, pp. 33–34)

The rewards of building a community, creating shared spaces and resources are described by Ted Stevens, Chair of the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) as 'infinite' (UK Cohousing Network, 2013b), and there is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that the process of designing, procuring and/or physically building together can generate a wealth of social value, expressed primarily as feelings of neighbourliness among group members (Ash et al., 2013; Brenton, 2013; Brinkley, 2013; Hill, 2013c, 2013d; Stevens, 2013c). People in Britain are living longer, and increasingly, spending their last years alone and describing themselves as lonely (Khaleeli, 2013) and some sources highlight the particular opportunity for models of mutual living, like Cohousing, to address the issue of isolation in an ageing population (Brenton, 2013; Moore, 2013a, 2013b).

Collective Custom Build represents a route to more stable communities. Ted Stevens suggests that self-builders don't just build a home, but create sustainable communities; putting down deep roots and moving on average only once every 25 years compared to the national average of once every 6 years (Stevens, 2013b), whilst Scheurer and Newman suggest that relationships are also built when people engage with the self-build process, resulting in 'conflict tested' communities in which bonds formed between neighbours are stronger than in other types of communities (Scheurer and Newman, 2009 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17).

Some sources also acknowledge the role that stable 'self build' communities have to play in 'placemaking' or community building, as people participate in the planning of their immediate neighbourhood and many self-builders value this aspect of the group-builds (Parvin et al., 2011b and ; Cerulli and Field, 2011; Hill, 2009; Broer and Titheridge, 2010; OFT, 2007; IN: Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17).

A recent study by researchers at Exeter University also showed that quality of life was perceived to be better in neighbourhoods that feature a significant collective self-built development - such as Ashley Vale in Bristol - when compared to the wider city (Clarke, 2012; IN: Stevens, 2013d). The London Legacy Development Corporation, evaluating the feasibility of offering Custom Build housing as part of the London 2012 Olympic park, lists a number of other, wider community benefits that could be achieved using such a strategy:

*1. Sharing of land costs, construction costs, and professionals' fees, makes the whole process more affordable for individuals. Large groups can benefit from economies of scale and their combined strength as a purchasing unit. Risk is aggregated between members, making the group a more attractive proposition for lenders.*

*2. A group can pool their knowledge and skills, supporting and motivating each other. By becoming a single 'client', they make large savings by sharing overheads (time and money). Members of a group with specific construction skills can also put in sweat-equity, significantly reducing the up-front cost.*

*3. A community network is formed 'incidentally' by the process of working together as a group. This can lead to a lasting mutual involvement in the governance of, and care for the neighbourhood and perhaps each other. In this sense we can think of building community social ties as a being a positive side-effect of building the houses themselves, or vice versa.<sup>15</sup>*

*4. Building as a group opens the door to new collaborative tenure / ownership models, such as a community land trust, or mutual home ownership.*

*5. Group custom-build can achieve higher densities than individual custom-build. This is important in making efficient use of land, and also allows custom-builders to afford sites at a cost comparable to a developer of high-density housing.*

(Roberts, 2012, p. 10)

Collective Custom Build can also facilitate greater public participation in planning and development decisions and often empowers groups of people to take ownership of where they live. Research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation also suggests that 'self-build' in general can be a route to involving local people in decision making about housing delivery (Burgess et al., 2010, p. 6) and that there is *potential for local housing trusts, community land trusts and self-build to not only deliver more housing but also to empower local communities* (Burgess et al., 2010, p. 7) and is acknowledged as an integral component of central Government's localism ambitions (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3).

Mechanisms that enable self-provision of housing can also empower local communities and make the planning process more effective in meeting people's needs (Falk and Carley, 2012; Boonstra and Boelens, 2011; Burgess et al., 2010; IN: Wallace et al., 2013), and moreover, as Wallace et al. highlight, citizen activism and engagement with the planning and development process were critical in the success of major international self-build developments at Vauban in Freiburg, Germany (Bagaeen, 2006; Scheurer and Newman, 2009; IN: Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17), and the Homeruskwartier at Almere in the Netherlands (Qu and Hasselaar, 2011 IN: ; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 18).

### Measuring Social Value

Significant, recent work on measuring social value has been conducted by Fujiwara and the Housing Association's Charitable Trust (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013), building on guidance included in the HM Treasury's 'Green Book' of guidance on evaluating and auditing Government initiatives ((Fujiwara & Campbell, 2011) IN: HM Treasury, 2003, pp. 57–59) and recent calls from academics and public sector organisations for further research in the field (Chevin, 2013; Parvin et al., 2011a, p. 33).

In this research, Fujiwara and HACT monetise the value of a number of factors related to housing quality and housing tenure that impact on well-being, deriving values for different indicators of housing quality, such as the value associated with the lack of neighbour noise or with a lack of problems related to damp and condensation - and non-housing 'interventions' - meaning any type of project, programme, policy or change made by a housing provider (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, pp. 9–10). They also conduct a review of the literature on ways to measure social impact on welfare, and non-welfare-related outcomes such as housing quality, comparing techniques such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA).

Discussing the theory of evaluation, Fujiwara and HACT state:

*“The welfare economic theory on valuation that underpins CBA<sup>45</sup> and SROI<sup>46</sup> analysis is that developed by John Hicks and others (Hicks & Allen, 1934). This states that the value of a good or service is subjective and should reflect the utility that people derive from it, where utility refers to the notion of underlying welfare or wellbeing. In other words, a monetary value should reflect the change in an individual’s utility or wellbeing due to experiencing or consuming of the good.”*

(Ibid. 2013, p. 11)

Fujiwara and HACT use the Wellbeing Valuation (WV) method to account for social value<sup>47</sup>. In terms of housing, this method looks directly at how people’s self-reports of their levels of wellbeing are affected by housing conditions and attaches a monetary value to this impact (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 11), estimating the value of things to individuals by assessing the impacts they have on people’s wellbeing (Ibid. 2013, p. 44),

This method is relatively new and has been gaining popularity in the academic literature and is now recognised by the UK HM Treasury Green Book guidance on policy evaluation ((Fujiwara & Campbell, 2011) IN: HM Treasury, 2003, pp. 57–59). In essence, the WV approach derives monetary values for different goods and services, like health, housing and social relationships, by estimating the amount of money required to keep individuals just as happy or satisfied with life in the absence of the good<sup>48</sup> - i.e., to keep their wellbeing constant (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 22).

Fujiwara points out that we must recognize the fundamental normative (or philosophical) arguments and assumptions we have made when thinking about social value and wellbeing - and that how we measure wellbeing consequently matters for how we measure social value and make social decisions (Ibid. 2013, p. 44),

Deciding what outcomes matter (i.e., social value, asset value, income or exchequer value) and then conceptualising how to measure the benefit of these outcomes (for example, are we concerned with the satisfaction of people’s preferences, rights or life satisfaction, or a combination of all?) are major challenges for housing providers of any kind.

The study provides an informative - rather than definitive - analysis about the value created by non-housing interventions, considering key housing factors that influence social value:

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<sup>45</sup> Cost-Benefit Analysis

<sup>46</sup> Social Return On Investment

<sup>47</sup> A central assumption of the wellbeing valuation approach is that measures of wellbeing (here life satisfaction) are good proxies of an individual’s underlying utility. In this sense, the utility function and its level sets (the indifference curves) can be directly observed and it is possible to estimate the marginal rates of substitution (MRS) between income and the non-market good to provide an estimate of value. For example, if a 20% reduction in local crime rates increases the life satisfaction of an individual by 1 index point and an increase in household income of £5,000 p.a. also increases their life satisfaction by 1 index point, then we would conclude that the value of the 20% reduction in crime to them is £5,000 per year (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 48).

<sup>48</sup> Fujiwara and HACT use the term ‘good’ to refer to any product service or experience that we are trying to value - Page 22.

Lack of space  
Garden  
Neighbour noise  
Street noise  
Poor lighting  
Bad heating  
Condensation  
Leaks  
Damp  
Rot  
Vandalism  
Local environment (pollution)

(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 13)

The study aligns these variables - taken from BHPS data<sup>49</sup> - with other benchmarks, such as United Nation's definition of adequate housing<sup>50</sup>, and discusses them alongside non-housing 'interventions' made by organisations such as Housing Associations that can add social value, such as:

Jobs and training  
Learning and skills  
Health services  
Promoting independence  
Safer, stronger communities  
Creating better places to live  
Community spaces

(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 30)

The social impact of these is discussed in relation to housing factors that enter our experiences – those that impact on life satisfaction and happiness, and Fujiwara notes that *'...of all the housing problems, neighbour noise has the largest negative effect on both life satisfaction and happiness and is the second most important determinant of people's desire to move house'*(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 21).

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<sup>49</sup> BHPS data is generated by the British Household Panel Survey, a long-running study that collects socio-economic information of private households in Great Britain.

<sup>50</sup> Please refer to (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 13) for an overview of comparisons, or to UN Habitat's 'The Right To Adequate Housing' (2009) available at [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21\\_rev\\_1\\_Housing\\_en.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf)

A worked example of how social value can be calculated using the Wellbeing Valuation method, taken from Fujiwara is given below:

*“ Example value of good quality Housing Association home*

- In this example we assume that a housing organisation builds or provides an additional 1,000 good quality homes, which accommodate people who would otherwise have been in poor quality private sector accommodation.*
- This intervention would have a value of **£973 per person per year** and assume that on average two people live in these new homes.*
- These 1,000 homes would have **a total value of £1.95m per year to these 2,000 people***
- These houses would continue to have this value in subsequent years provided that they were kept in good condition.*
- The overall value to society of this intervention could be understood by comparing the costs of building and maintaining the houses to the value that people place on the housing for the life of the houses. “*

(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 28)

A further example, relating to the Wellbeing Evaluation of employment is:

*“... below we will derive an indicative value for employment, which will show the value individuals attach to being employed, will be a useful gauge of the value created by HA's employment and enterprise services only if we can make some assumptions about how many additional people an association helped get in to employment.*

*For example, the study found that unemployment works out at a cost of **about £8,700 per year, using the WV approach and note that this is in addition to the loss of wage income and hence should be seen as the non-financial costs of unemployment (i.e., they relate to the emotional costs of unemployment).***

(Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, pp. 31–33)

The method is also used to evaluate health problems - with depression or anxiety estimated at around £43,453 per person per year, almost twice the figure associated with the next most significant value, associated with alcohol or drug-related problems (Ibid. 2013, p. 33).

Fujiwara draw attention to the emergence of innovative methodologies – using resources such as WikiVOIS<sup>51</sup> and Community Insight mapping tool<sup>52</sup> – that are capable of building a common language for evaluating social value, but agree with Parvin et al. (2011a, p. 33) and Chevin (2013) in noting that further work is needed in developing practical tools to enable housing providers to make use of the insights in this and follow-up research, to support decision making and impact reporting within their organisations, particularly a robust model capable of integrating the social value metrics being generated by current and ongoing research with asset valuation models used by housing providers (Fujiwara and HACT, 2013, p. 47).

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<sup>51</sup> The WikiVOIS database as been initiated by the SROI Network and aims to provide a comprehensive database of tools and terms for measuring social value. Please visit [http://www.wikivois.org/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](http://www.wikivois.org/index.php?title=Main_Page) to find out more.

<sup>52</sup> Community Insight is a Geographic Information System (GIS) based tool providing online community mapping and reporting for housing providers, developed by the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT). For more information, please visit <http://www.hact.org.uk/communityinsight>.



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# 7 DEFINING COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

## THE THREE MAIN TYPES OF COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

Enabling groups of people to come together in order to provide their own homes collectively or as part of a multi-unit site is commonly viewed as the most viable way to 'scale-up' self-provision as a mainstream procurement route for housing in the UK<sup>53</sup>.

There is some disparity in the terms used to refer to collective forms of self-provision, which this study aims to clarify by offering an initial definition that embraces the recent political and commercial attention paid to the idea of self-provided housing, most notably the increasingly frequent use of the term 'Custom Build Homes' (DCLG, 2011, pp. 14–16) in reference to self-provision<sup>54</sup>.

Collective Custom Build initiatives can be understood as a form of self-provided housing<sup>55</sup>, often representing unique products of particular stakeholder partnerships that respond to local contexts, broadly categorised as one of three main types:

**1 - Independent Group Custom Build** – in which a group of people come together to provide housing primarily for themselves to occupy, but which may also include a proportion for sale or for rent. The group leads and project manages the project. Projects are usually initiated by a group of citizens who form around a core idea or principle, such as an aspiration to provide affordable homes, or the lifestyle ideals of the Cohousing movement<sup>56</sup>.

Please refer to 'Examples of Independent Group Custom Build' below.

**2 – Developer Enabled Custom Build** – in which a private developer or house-builder will build homes specifically for known occupants on a 'multi-unit site'. Projects are initiated, led and project managed by a private company in one of two general forms:

- a). **Custom Build Developer or Home Manufacturer** - directly constructing homes on behalf of customers who have specified a custom-designed home, usually on relatively small sites, or as smaller schemes within larger developments;
- b). **Development Manager** - receiving a fee in return for overseeing the Custom Build process and managing supply chains on large sites as well as facilitating access to financial advice and other professional support. Development Management can also happen on small sites, or on a number of dispersed sites under a single development framework.

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<sup>53</sup> A number of sources support this observation anecdotally, including a number of 'Custom Build Developers' and the UK Government's Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). However, as an emerging field of study there is very little evidence in published literature.

<sup>54</sup> Please refer to 'Disparity in terms' discussed in this section for a fuller account of the terms used to refer to collective forms of self-provision'.

<sup>55</sup> Please refer to 'Self-Provided Housing' in this study.

<sup>56</sup> Cohousing is a way of living which brings individuals and families together in groups to share common aims and activities while also enjoying their own self-contained accommodation and personal space. The main features of cohousing communities are: They are set up and run by their members for mutual benefit; Members are consciously committed to living as a community; Developments are designed to encourage social contact and a sense of neighbourhood among members; Common space facilitates shared activities like community meals and other amenities like laundries, heating systems, guest rooms, transport, etc may be shared (UK Cohousing Network, 2013a)

The developer will usually deal with customers as individuals within the 'group' scheme and the level of 'collectiveness' experienced by the group is dictated by the process by which the developer manages the group. Generally, the developer also takes responsibility for the infrastructure and urban form of the site and may also offer part-built options - such as 'serviced plot', 'slab only', 'water-tight shell' or 'self-finish' - in which the self-provider takes responsibility for completing a degree of the work on their home in return for cost savings.

Please refer to '*Examples of Developer Enabled Custom Build*' below.

**3 - Supported Community Custom Build** – in which a Local Authority, Registered Provider of Social Housing, 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisation or special-purpose partnership - support a group of people to provide their own homes. There are a number of sub-categories of Supported Community Custom Build:

- a) *Enabled Community Custom Build*<sup>57</sup> - The group can be formed by a particular organisation with the specific purpose of constructing homes, usually for people in housing need, such as those facing long-term unemployment or homelessness.
- b) *Assisted Community Custom Build* - A group has already formed independently but requires significant assistance from public or 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations in order to make a project viable.
- c) *Large Scale Enabled Custom Build* - A local authority or other body provides the political leadership and land allocation to bring forward self-provision on large strategic sites, or across a number of smaller, dispersed sites under a single framework.

Please refer to '*Examples of Supported Community Custom Build*' below.

Whilst there is some disparity and inconsistent use of terms across both academia industry publications<sup>58</sup>, these definitions correlate strongly with those used by key sources: the Self Build Portal uses '*Independent community collaboration*', '*Developer led group project*' and '*Supported community self build group*' (Self Build Portal, 2013a), whilst the Building Societies Association, which represents lenders, uses the same categories - adding that contractors, as well as developers can lead 'developer-enabled' projects. As organisations representing, respectfully, the industry-supported portal for information of the self-provided sector and an umbrella organisation supporting lenders to provide finance for self-build, this correlation is relatively significant.

This study has found that partnerships play a critical role in developing initiatives in what is still considered to be an emerging sector and it is worth noting that the definitions given above are necessarily somewhat blurry when it comes to classifying Collective Custom Build initiatives. As such, each distinct case typically has its own set of conditions, derived from the combination of

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<sup>57</sup> It is worth noting that the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) differentiates between '*Enabled Self Build*' and '*Enabled / Assisted Community Housing*', and can usefully illustrate the subtle yet significant difference between enabling and assisting, describing the former as '*a relatively new phenomenon that usually involves the council seconding staff to work alongside a community group to help them plan and redevelop their area*' (NaSBA, 2013c, p. 6); whilst the latter can '*often involve the council providing financial guarantees and other support and may even 'parachute in' an independent specialist, consultant or enabling team to accelerate the process of community-led development*' (NaSBA, 2013c, p. 8).

<sup>58</sup> Please refer to 'Disparity in terms' discussed in this section for a fuller account of the terms used to refer to collective forms of self-provision'.

stakeholders, the level of direct involvement of each stakeholder with the procurement process, and the array of constitutional and statutory tools employed to facilitate the project<sup>59</sup>.

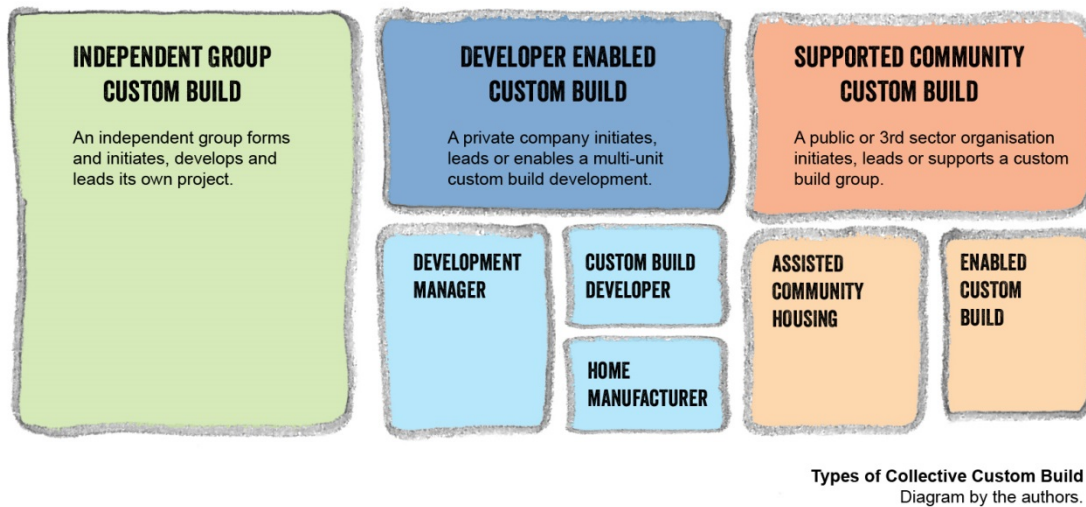


Fig.5 – Types of Collective Custom Build – diagram by the authors.

## Examples of Independent Group Custom Build

Examples of this type of Collective Custom Build are The Yard at Ashley Vale in Bristol, procured by the Ashley Vale Action Group (CABE, 2011; Self Build Portal, 2013b), the Hockerton Housing Project (Self Build Portal, 2013c), the Findhorn Foundation (Self Build Portal, 2013d; Selfbuild Central, 2009), the Lancaster Cohousing (Jennings et al., 2012; Lancaster Cohousing, 2013; Self Build Portal, 2013e) development at Forgebank, Lancaster, Springhill Cohousing (Springhill Cohousing, 2013) in Stroud<sup>60</sup>.

The Self Build Portal describes the benefits of Independent Group Custom Build as being:

- One of the lowest cost routes to self build - typically saving around 40% on plot costs and 10% on building costs.

<sup>59</sup> See the National Self Build Association's Practice Guide, 'How the public sector can help people build their own homes - 1<sup>st</sup> edition' (NaSBA, 2013a) for an overview of 16 distinct conditions likely to be encountered by individuals and organisations engaging with self-provided housing, including different forms of 'enabling' and varying degrees of direct self-provider involvement with the house-building process. These include:

- 1) Identities and constitutions likely to be employed by, or be useful to self-providing groups (Cohousing; Community Land Trusts; Mutual Home Ownership Societies; and Housing Trusts);
- 2) Tools available to local authorities and other public sector organisations that can support self-provision (Land designation or allocation policies; Neighbourhood Development Plans / Orders; Providing serviced plots for sale);
- 3) Terms referring to the level of direct involvement with the procurement process experienced by self-providers (DIY Self Build; Self-Convert or / Self-Refurb; Self-Finish; Enabled/Assisted Community Housing; Self Build with Construction Training; Kit / Manufactured Home Solutions)

The NaSBA definitions are important in understanding that each Collective Custom Build project has a specific identity, resulting from the specific partnership and combination of conditions unique to - and derived from - its particular context. For example, a cohousing group might approach their local authority with plans they have commissioned themselves, to build out a parcel of land allocated for self-provision, within a larger developer-led scheme.

<sup>60</sup> Some sources would also include the Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) scheme in Bramall, Leeds (LILAC, 2013) as an Independent Group Custom Build project, although for this study it is included as an example of *Assisted Community Custom Build* due to the significant assistance that the otherwise independent, self-formed group received from the local authority - who made land available - and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), who provided a grant to remediate the land and enabled development to take place. Please refer to 'Examples of Supported Community Custom Build' in this section.

- Sociable; collective custom builders get to know their neighbours as they build
- Remaining flexible in most cases in terms of individual design and construction.
- Offering an opportunity to influence the wider area, such as including communal play areas for children, allotments and other urban realm features within the overall scheme.

(Self Build Portal, 2013f)

However, it also describes the challenges as:

- It can take a long time to get a group together, and to get a clear consensus on how to use a larger site; sometimes there can be disagreements that are tricky to resolve.
- It can be difficult to raise the finance to buy a larger site. Some people may let others down - for example they may not finish their home as fast as everyone else, or 'pull their weight' on communal tasks.

(Ibid. 2013f)

For fuller details on completed and emerging schemes please refer to '*Successful Examples – UK and International. And 'Pioneers & Partnerships'*'.

## Examples of Developer Enabled Custom Build

Examples of emerging *Custom Build Developers* and *Home Manufacturers* include Fairgrove Homes' '*Custom Build*' service (Fairgrove Homes Ltd, 2013), Urban Self Build's '*Your Home Your Way*' service (Urban Self Build, 2013); SolidSpace's '*self-build service*' (SolidSpace, 2013); and HAB's recent expansion to offer a 'one-stop-shop for Self-build and Custom Finish projects' (HAB, 2013; Rankin, 2013).

Examples of emerging larger scale *Development Managers* offering Custom Build on larger scale 'multi-unit sites' include Igloo Regeneration's *Custom Build Enabling* model (Brown, 2013; Igloo, 2013), for which the developer takes a fee for managing the development framework, marketing and supply chain for a large site, within which smaller Custom Build Developers and Home Manufacturers deliver smaller schemes; and the Archihaus factory-manufactured PassivHaus product (ArchiHaus, 2013; Hines and Carlsson, 2013) ; and the CornerstoneZED-developed Bickleigh Down project (Bickleigh, 2012; Everard, 2013),

Large-scale models involving both types of Developer Enabled Custom Build could also be delivered by large volume house-builders, although there is currently no evidence of such initiatives beyond general interest in exploring the viability of the Collective Custom Build model.

The Self Build Portal describes the benefits of Developer Enabled Custom Build, to the collective custom build 'customer', as being;

- Relatively simple and risk-free;
- Offering a say in the design; or choice from a range of designs;
- Cheaper than buying something 'off-the-shelf' from a conventional house-builder, especially if self-finish and other 'sweat-equity' options are considered, which can result in savings of between 10-20%.

(Self Build Portal, 2013g)

However, it also describes the challenges as being;

- A relatively undeveloped market;
- Sometimes being more expensive, as the developer will want to recover their costs and make a fair profit.

(Ibid. 2013g)

For fuller details on completed and emerging schemes please refer to 'Successful Examples – UK and International. And 'Pioneers & Partnerships'.

## Examples of Supported Community Custom Build

Historically, the Diggers Self Build (Architype, 2013; Walter Segal Self Build Trust, 2013) and Hedgehog Housing Cooperative (Architype, 2013; Bradshaw, 2013; Grand Designs Revisited, 2001; Selfbuild Central, 2013) projects represent the most widely-known Supported Community Custom Build projects and both relied heavily on an enabling role played by architects Architype, and the involvement of CHISEL and South London Family Housing Associations to deliver a Self-Build-To-Rent model of tenure.

The third sector organisation, the Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) has also enabled a significant number of schemes, usually in partnership with Housing Associations and Local Authorities<sup>61</sup> and is an active lobbyist of local authorities and housing associations to include self-building provision within their housing strategies. The CSBA can secure funding, liaise with training organisations to include options to gain National Vocational Qualifications, and work with architects to design housing with appropriate construction techniques for self-provision (Awan et al., 2011).

Other more recent examples of large-scale enabling include Cherwell District Council's *Build! Programme* (Build! Programme and Cherwell District Council, 2013) and Cornwall CLT Ltd (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a), an umbrella organisation supporting the development of local community land trusts with support from Cornwall Unitary Authority's Revolving Loan Fund (Moore and Northcott, 2010, p. 38) and the Cornwall Rural Housing Association (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013b), whilst the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) development in Bramall, Leeds (LILAC, 2013) is an example of otherwise independent, self-formed group that has been assisted significantly by their Local Authority - who made land available - and by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), who provided a grant to remediate the land and enabled development to take place.

The Self Build Portal describes the benefits of Supported Community Custom Build, some of which it shares with Independent Group Custom Build, as being;

- Enabling people on low incomes to build a home – either for rent, part ownership or full ownership, by working as part of a group to minimise costs.
- Sociable; collective custom builders get to know their neighbours as they build.
- Offering an opportunity to influence the wider area, such as including communal play areas for children, allotments and other urban realm features within the overall scheme (Self Build Portal, 2013f).
- Offering the opportunity to learn construction skills that may in turn lead to increased chances of securing a job in the building industry afterwards

(Self Build Portal, 2013h).

However, it also cites the challenges as being:

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<sup>61</sup> Please refer to the Community Self Build Agency website for an overview of significant projects (Community Self Build Agency, 2013) and to De Souza 2013 for an overview of their most recent project in Bedminster, Bristol (De Souza, 2013).



- It can take time to get a group together, and to get a clear consensus on how to use a larger site; sometimes there can be disagreements that are tricky to resolve.
- It can be difficult to raise the finance to buy a site or to get funding or a donated site via a social landlord. Sometimes projects also need grants to be secured to make them fully viable and this can be challenging
- Some people may not 'pull their weight':
- It requires a commitment to work typically 20 hours a week for 46-60 weeks

(Self Build Portal, 2013h).

For fuller details on completed and emerging schemes please refer to '*Successful Examples – UK and International*'. And '*Pioneers & Partnerships*'.

## Disparity in terms

It is worth some discussion of the disparity in the range of terms currently used to refer to nuanced forms of self-provided housing; particularly the inter-changeability of the terms 'self-build' and 'custom build'.

### Anecdotal Interchangeable terms

The phrases **self-build** and '**custom build**' are often used synonymously, and are commonly freely interchangeable, although there is disparity and inconsistency in many sources.

Industry expert, Stephen Hill, describes **self-build** simply as a means of procurement (Hill, 2013), whilst the Office of Fair Trading defines **self-build** house-building activity as "*any instance where a person is involved...in the production of their new home rather than buying from a speculative homebuilder*"(OFT, 2007 IN; NaSBA and DCLG, 2011, p. 3).

However, there is some consensus that **both self-build and custom build** are better understood as forms of **self-provided housing** as discussed previously in this study; defined by Parvin et al. as:

*"...regarding any process whereby those who will be living in the dwellings take responsibility for procuring their own home, including not just those who physically construct the buildings, as well as those who contract certain tasks out to professionals but keep a central role, carrying the financial risk for the project and having control over design decisions."*

(Parvin et al., 2011, pp. 28–36)

### In the academic literature

To date, there is relatively little academic analysis of Custom Build as a distinct field, beyond the definition of self-provided housing described above by Parvin et al. (2011).

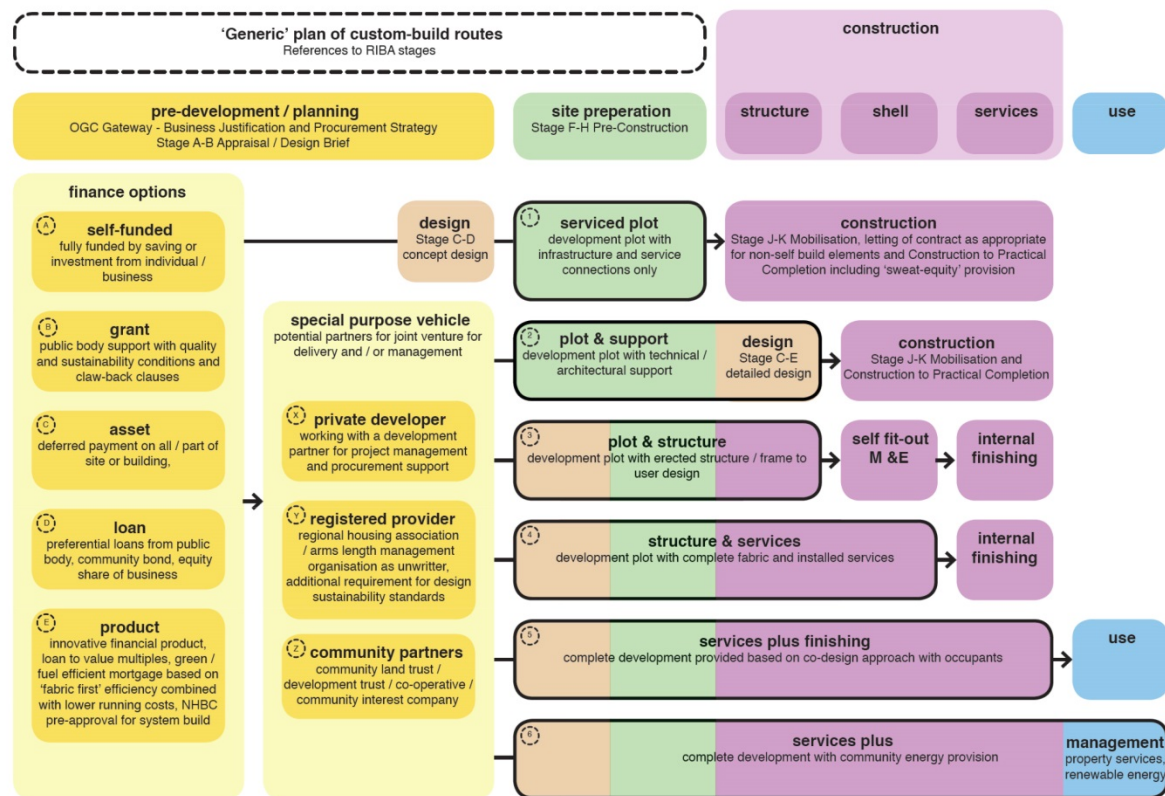
Wallace et al. (2013) note that the UK Government's 2011 '*Laying The Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*' changed the terminology from self-build to custom build (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 11), and situates custom build as a form of enabled- self-build within the Self Build Portal's seven '*routes to building your own home*'(Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 11–12).

Bomken et al. (2013) – focusing on developer-led models - attempt to articulate the complexity and diversity of the custom build sector in a 'Generic Plan of Custom Build Routes' (Bomken et al., 2013) highlighting that custom build can be understood as offering a matrix of opportunities for users to benefit from direct involvement in the procurement of their housing, covering 'sweat equity' – the direct input of physical or other work in return for equity – and financial risks, as well as a variety of combinations

of the two in varying degrees of magnitude; an 'enabling partner' taking on the remaining work and/or risk. Focussing on developing a sustainable delivery model for affordable housing at scale via a Community Land Trust for the North East of England, the study maps out developer-led custom build processes against the RIBA Workstages, which represent the industry-standard framework for procuring buildings and development.

## Generic development process

(based upon RIBA plan of works / basis for market testing for HCA / Middlesbrough Council)



**Fig.6 - Generic plan of custom-build routes** (Bomken et al., 2013) - Custom build can be understood as offering a matrix of opportunities for users to benefit from direct involvement in the procurement of their housing, covering 'sweat equity' – the direct input of physical or other work in return for equity – and financial risks. The study maps out developer-led custom build processes against the RIBA Workstages, which represent the industry-standard framework for procuring buildings and development.

## Disparity in terms - Government & Industry

The term **custom build** has arisen relatively recently in the housing industry due to use by Government bodies such as the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) in the Custom Build Homes Fund Prospectus<sup>62</sup> (HCA, 2012) and industry bodies such as the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) to refer to cases of self-build where a group of people are involved, or where multiple units brought forward on the same site (Stevens, 2013a). Whilst custom build appears to have been adopted as the universal, official term, many sources still frequently use self-build as an anecdotal term of reference.

Whilst some sources consider 'custom build' simply as the Government name for the self-build sector (McVitty and Building Societies Association, 2012), there is some consensus that **custom build** is a

<sup>62</sup> Please refer to 'Statute & Policy' in this study for a fuller explanation of the significance of the HCA Custom Build Homes Fund.

term 'used more accurately to reflect the variety of ways in which people can have their own home built for them', whilst **self build** is used to describe 'homes which are largely built as a DIY project' (NaSBA, 2012, p. 2). In a recent seminar presentation at the Ecobuild 2013 trade show the NaSBA Chair, Ted Stevens, effectively defined custom build as simply 'scaled-up' self-build, describing **self-build** as "when individuals create a new home to their own design – either literally building it themselves or (more usually) working with an architect or builder/developer" and **custom build** as "becoming recognised as the larger scale form of self build – where groups of people are involved, or a number of self build plots are delivered on a single site" (Stevens, 2013a, 2013b).

As a result, **custom build** is most commonly understood to refer to self-provision that involves some form of enabling role, played by a developer or other support organisation and delivering 'multiple units', rather than the common perception of self-build as 'single, new-build one-off homes' (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 3). Collective Custom Build schemes are equally likely to combine multi-unit dwellings, such as flats, maisonettes, and terraces alongside detached and semi-detached homes, and are seen as the most viable model for 'scaling up' self-provision as a mainstream housing option.

The HCA - in its Custom Build Homes Fund Prospectus - defines Custom Build Homes as:

*"... homes built or commissioned by individuals or groups of individuals for their own use, either by building the home on their own or working with builders. Group custom build projects are where developers build group schemes for clients on multi-unit sites or where registered housing providers work with self-organised community groups and a developer or contractor to bring forward a multi-unit custom build home project."* (HCA, 2012, p. 6)

However, the definition of the term Custom Build – and specifically Collective Custom Build - should be kept necessarily broad to avoid the term being co-opted by private developers or political parties, and remain inclusive of independent group self-providing initiatives that commission housing custom-designed to suit their needs and lifestyles.

### Typical Stakeholders

The National Self Build Association (NaSBA) provide an illustrative 'map' of the wider self-providing sector in which Collective Custom Build sits, including the 'self-build media' and non-physical components, such as the aspiration for self-provision evident in the general public:

[diagram overleaf]

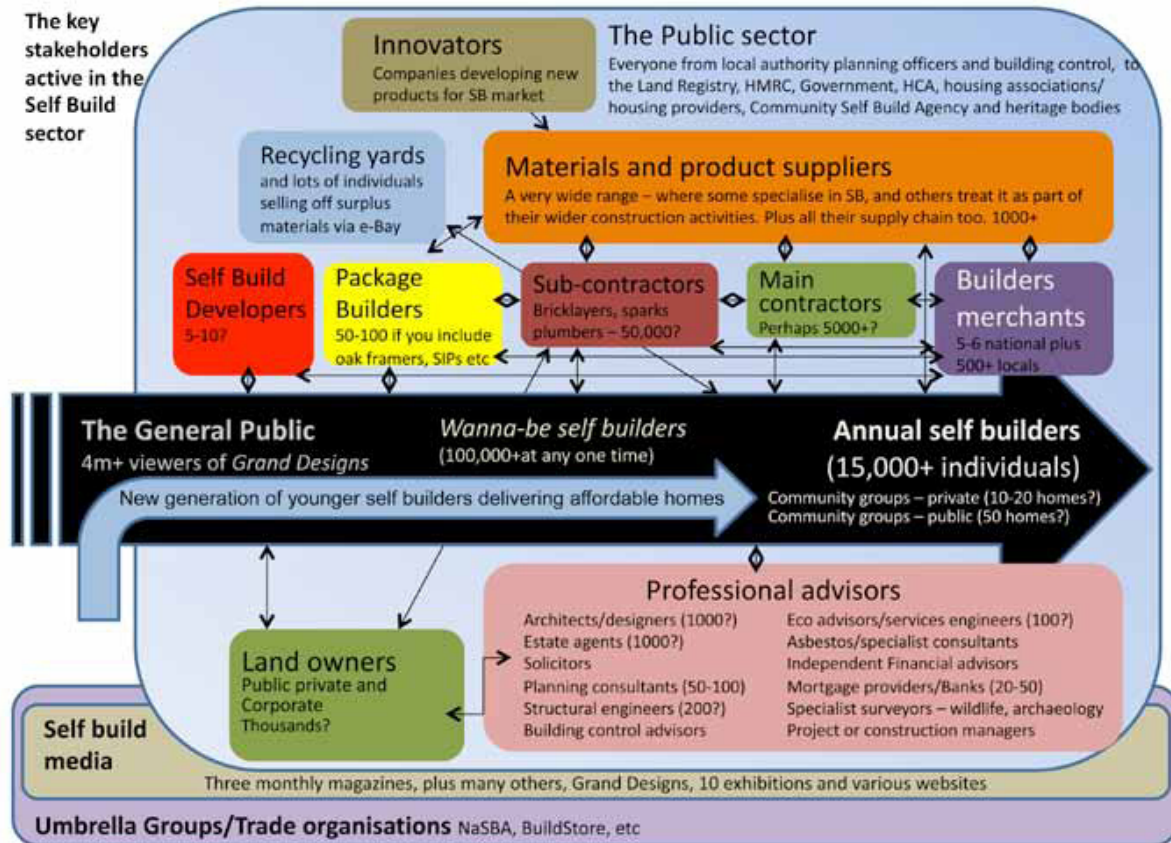


Fig.7 - Key stakeholders in the self-build sector (NaSBA, 2011, p. 18)

As a model of housing procurement, Collective Custom Build tends to involve any number of stakeholders typically involved with the UK house-building industry, in a variety of capacities, including:

**Private Companies;** Developers, House-builders, and 'Supply-Chain' businesses, such as Main Contractors, Sub-Contractors, Builder's Merchants, Materials and Product Suppliers, Package Builders, Kit Home Manufacturers;

**The Public Sector:** everyone from Local Authorities (typically council leaders, elected members and officers in Planning, Housing and Estates) to central Government agencies such as the Land Registry, HMRC, and Homes & Communities Agency (HCA);

**Third Sector**<sup>63</sup>: usually Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs), including Housing Associations, and organisations formerly referred to as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) as well as other Private Registered Providers of Social Housing (PRPSHs). Third Sector

<sup>63</sup> The Third Sector Research Centre has published a series of scoping papers on Third Sector housing (Third Sector Research Centre, 2013a), including an analysis of the various sub-sectors (Third Sector Research Centre, 2013b), but doesn't refer to Registered Providers or Registered Social Landlords directly.

It also uses the 2009 Communities & Local Government (CLG) definition to define the Third Sector, which may need updating in recognition of the consensus among secondary sources that obtaining a consistent definition of the Third Sector is problematic (DBIS, 2013, p. 5). The 2009 CLG definition describes the Third Sector as comprising '...nongovernmental organisations that are value driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals. We also include housing associations within the third sector' (CLG (2009) IN: Third Sector Research Centre, 2013b, p. 4).

stakeholders in housing can also include homelessness and 'self-help' housing organisations, like the Community Self Build Agency (CSBA)<sup>64</sup>;

**Beneficiaries:** private self-organised community groups; public-sector organised community groups; or groups of individual house-holds assembled by a Developer partner on a 'multi-unit site';

**Land-owners:** Public, Private or Corporate, which may include any of the above;

**Professional Advisors:** Architects/Designers, Estate Agents, Solicitors, Planning Consultants, Engineers (structural, services, environmental, etc.), Building Control Advisors, Financial Advisors, Surveyors (wildlife, archaeology, etc), Project or Construction Managers;

**Lenders:** Mortgage Providers, Building Societies, Banks;

**Umbrella Organisations:** principally industry bodies, such as the National Self Build Association (NaSBA)<sup>65</sup>, but also including organisations such as the UK Cohousing Network<sup>66</sup> and National CLT Network<sup>67</sup>, or more regional support networks such as the Land Society<sup>68</sup> or Cornwall CLTs Ltd<sup>69</sup>, who could also be described as part of the Third Sector.

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<sup>64</sup> Please refer to the Community Self Build Agency's website (Community Self Build Agency, 2013), or read an analytical account via the Spatial Agency database of alternative housing and 'other ways of doing architecture' (Awan et al., 2011).

<sup>65</sup> Please refer to the NaSBA website for further information (NaSBA, 2013b).

<sup>66</sup> Please refer to the UK Cohousing Network website for further information (UK Cohousing Network, 2013b)

<sup>67</sup> Please refer to the National CLT Network website for further information (National CLT Network, 2013)

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# 8 PIONEERS & PARTNERSHIPS

## COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD INNOVATION DEPENDS UPON PARTNERSHIPS

A number of pioneering schemes are coming forward across the UK that seek to deliver self-provided housing at scale through a Collective Custom Build route, enabled by partnership between key stakeholders in the construction industry. Wallace et al. observe that these represent a diverse range of pilot initiatives, which are likely to grow in the short term as a response to Government initiatives in the field (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 8)

In almost all cases, such pioneering partnerships aim to share the risk of a pilot project and work mutually to access resources, such as finance, or expand capacity to deliver projects that no single partner would be able to deliver alone.

As Wallace et al. observe, partnership working and/or special purpose development 'consortia' have the potential to overcome barriers that currently limit the scaling up of self-provision (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 8), such as access to short-term development finance to get pilot schemes off the ground, access to suitable development land, capacity to carry out both physical construction work, design and administrative duties associated with construction, and the capacity to form, manage, direct, serve professionally or otherwise support a group of people, who may represent a client or beneficiary with more than one point of contact, and a very different dynamic to an individual representative.

One of the main benefits attached to partnership is the ability to draw in funding from diverse sources, acknowledged by the Ashley Vale Action Group as a critical factor for success in their self-build neighbourhood at Ashley Vale in Bristol, which included contributions from individuals within the self-building group (Moulding, 2012, p. 35). Bristol City Council also highlight the strategic value in partnering with the Community Self Build Agency to deliver Collective Custom Build at the West Street Community Self-Build Project for returning service veterans facing a high likelihood of unemployment and homelessness, citing the CSBA's capacity to access sources of finance unavailable to the local authority<sup>70</sup>.

Custom Self Build Ltd is an example of a developer that specifically markets their ability to partner with local authorities and registered providers to deliver 'self-build' housing, usually on 'multi-unit sites', offering leadership and support throughout the entire duration of a project. They describe the mechanism for facilitating partnership as a partnering or management form of contract, with the developer acting as Principal Contractor (Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013), but have yet to fully complete a Collective Custom Build scheme. Private development company, D & O Management Services Ltd - who have completed a number of multi-unit schemes in which they have assisted formerly unacquainted groups of people, usually working in the building trades to form project specific housing associations and build homes - highlight the importance of positive group dynamics and the value that experienced developers can bring to Collective Custom Build partnerships:

*"An ideal group has to be balanced with a mixture of skills and professions as well as complementary interests and attitudes. Many things are taken into account when allocating the membership of a scheme. You obviously need skilled tradesmen however, equally important, there should be someone experienced at administration and book-keeping. Group members come from a variety of professions and walks of life but they each have something to offer to the success of the project.*

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<sup>70</sup> Interviews conducted for this study by the authors, which in turn were corroborated at the Motivating Collective Custom Build focus group workshop, held at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (Brown et al., 2013).



*Seems like a good idea? It is!! But it needs experienced, professional guidance to ensure success and that's where D & O Management Services Limited come in."*

(D & O Management Services Ltd, 2013)

In other schemes, the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) has been a critical partner in facilitating access to land or development finance and other grants, both for successful built schemes such as the LILAC development in Leeds, and for other developer-enabled proposals via the Custom Build Homes Fund<sup>71</sup>, through which it provides short-term development finance to multi-unit schemes (HCA, 2012, 2013).

Particular attention has been paid to the capacity of Housing Associations and interest groups such as Community Land Trusts, working together, to build affordable housing (Peacock, 2011) and a recent report commissioned by the Smith Institute, entitled anticipates that the *Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012*<sup>72</sup> will promote new partnerships across the range of housing association activity (Chevin, 2013, p. 31). Chevin goes on to note:

*"One of the recurring themes of this report is the need for housing associations to forge new relationships and partnerships. The consensus among interviewees is that working more closely with local authorities will be of critical importance, as councils explore their own new-found freedoms. Both councils and associations will need to work more closely with their tenants, especially over managing the impacts of welfare reforms".*

(Ibid. 2013, p. 58)

There is particular acknowledgment that pioneering, large-scale, international schemes have been the product of specific partnerships emerging from their local context, often led by the public sector. The Homeruskwartier in Almere, NL, is frequently referenced for the way the local authority promoted land through allocation for self-build, producing an urban design and facilitating the sale of serviced-plots direct to self-providers, whilst the plots themselves were developed out largely by private individuals or groups, supported significantly by commercial, developer-led 'home manufacturers' (Stevens, 2013; NaSBA, 2013; Brown, 2013; Self Build Portal, 2013b; DCLG, 2011).

At Vauban, for example, an urban extension to the city of Freiburg in Germany, the success of developing a sustainable urban neighbourhood - with high concentration so of self-build apartment blocks for young families - was a product of the availability of public land, a sympathetic political climate and the presence of a strong local environmental industry (Kasioumi, 2010 IN.; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 17). Within the overall scheme – made possible by partnerships between local authority and local developers and supply chains, and driven by strong political leadership – other, specific partnerships delivered building-scale or street-scale Collective Custom Build schemes (Hill, 2013a, 2013b).

There is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest the emergence of a Custom Build Enabler - as a commercial service encompassing some degree of skill in participatory design facilitation, alongside a sensitivity to group dynamics and comprehensive development management credentials – is both essential to fulfilling the potential of Collective Custom Build and an inevitable consequence of its continued development as a sector (Hill, 2013c; Brown, 2013). This role demands a complex and socially-and-culturally attuned set of skills, and it is not yet clear which – if any – profession currently possesses the appropriate range, or whether any evolving profession should align itself with the public, private or 3<sup>rd</sup> sector.

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<sup>71</sup> Successful applicants to the HCA's Custom Build Homes Fund include Urban Self Build's proposals at Hempstead Green in Peterborough (Urban Self Build, 2013; Self Build Portal, 2013a) and Fairgrove Homes' proposals in Derbyshire (Fairgrove Homes Ltd, 2013; McKenna, 2013). To date, the HCA confirm that there have been fifteen successful applicants, although not all have completed the necessary procedures to begin development and draw down their loans (Nelson and Chettle, 2013; Nelson, 2013).

<sup>72</sup> Chevin notes that under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 housing associations must define the social and economic value and impact of the services they offer, when tendering for a contract from a local authority or another relevant Body (Chevin, 2013, p. 31).

It has also become evident that whilst there is a general will to engage in partnerships amongst stakeholders in the construction industry, translating that will into effective partnerships relies on the development of legal, contractual and organisational frameworks for partnering, and consensus as to what constitutes reliable evidence of demand for Collective Custom Build<sup>73</sup>.

Although many agencies are breaking ground in the field, it is observed that they are often doing so individually, with limited opportunity to share knowledge and experience. Wallace et al. note that there is a clear role for Government to play in evaluating emerging schemes and models, as well as promoting horizontal sharing of good practice among key industry stakeholders (Wallace et al., 2013, p. 8).

Please refer to the following pages for examples of emerging Collective Custom Build schemes and partnerships.

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<sup>73</sup> For example, developers may require some robust evidence of demand for Collective Custom Build from local authorities before entering into partnership. The lack of consistent terms of reference when discussing 'evidence of demand' between key stakeholders - and particularly between local authorities and private developers - was a significant talking point in the Motivating Collective Custom Build focus group workshop, held at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 (Brown et al., 2013).

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# 9A EMERGING INDEPENDENT SCHEMES

## EMERGING INDEPENDENT GROUP CUSTOM BUILD SCHEMES

It is difficult to identify many emerging, entirely Independent Group Custom Build schemes in the academic literature<sup>74</sup>, as most emerging schemes involve some form of partnership to overcome key prohibitive barriers, such as access to land or finance, or organising as a group. For example, the Land Society in Devon, and Cornwall CLTs Ltd. In Cornwall continue to assist a significant number of local groups and interested individuals to form Community Land Trusts and find sites on the edges of rural towns and villages, and many of these groups are currently in the process of developing their proposals and applying for planning permission (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a, 2013b; Fox, 2013; Moore and Northcott, 2010; T. Stevens, 2013a; The Land Society, 2013).

Additionally, a significant number of Cohousing groups are in the process of looking for a site and developing proposals<sup>75</sup>.

A joint venture between two organisations - Ecomotive and Wu Wo - has established the online Community Build portal to allow people to search for other people, form groups, search for land and manage their communications and negotiations for buying land. The portal also uses an online map to identify groups and to date has registered a significant number of groups or individuals wishing to form a group<sup>76</sup>.

Some existing independent groups - such as the Hockerton Housing Project<sup>77</sup> - have plans to extend their schemes, or build second phases..

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<sup>74</sup> Lack of academic literature of 'emerging' subjects is attributable to the slow response time that conventional academic publication channels have – hence they are not always appropriate to capture 'emerging' things while they are emerging.

<sup>75</sup> The Cohousing Groups Directory - an online map maintained by the UK Cohousing Network - not only identifies emerging groups, likely to develop largely Independent Group Custom Build schemes, but also provides a conduit through which interested individuals and organisations can engage with groups and the UK Cohousing Network as an umbrella organisation - see [www.cohousing.org.uk/groups](http://www.cohousing.org.uk/groups) (UK Cohousing Network, 2013)

<sup>76</sup> See [www.communitybuild.org.uk/find-group](http://www.communitybuild.org.uk/find-group)

<sup>77</sup> The Hockerton Housing project has already completed a scheme in Nottinghamshire as an independent self-providing group (Self Build Portal, 2013), and has plans to begin a second phase of development in the near future. (Hockerton Housing Project, 2013).

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# 9B EMERGING DEVELOPER-ENABLED SCHEMES

## EMERGING DEVELOPER-ENABLED CUSTOM BUILD SCHEMES

There are a number of innovative Developer Enabled Custom Build schemes coming forward around the country that, although they yet to complete any dwellings, have reached significant stages of development at the time of writing.

Custom Build Developers take either a Development Management role, facilitating access to supply chains and other aspects of development on larger multi-unit sites, or a role more accurately described as that of a Home Manufacturer, supplying homes, with varying opportunities for custom specification and often involving some degree of pre-fabrication, directly to individual households or groups. In some instances, developers may provide a service that is a combination of the two roles, whilst the examples listed below also include initiatives set up by kit-home manufacturers, who, although more traditionally understood as part of the supply chain, are piloting more comprehensive services, either directly to self-providers or to Custom Build Developers.

Whilst the provision of serviced plots, with or without a house, is the most common business model, some developers are also actively seeking out and supporting local people to start off new developments as a group scheme (NaSBA, 2011, p. 9). Custom Build Developers will often make quite extensive use of social media to market their services – mostly via blogs and twitter – and other web-based technology, such as Google Maps to facilitate interaction with potential Custom Build customers. As a marketing strategy, this correlates closely with the aspiration to offer a product tailored to individuals and maintain the ‘friendly face’ to development.

However, many smaller developers offering Custom Build are only loosely ‘collective’ in their approach, despite being developing ‘multi-unit’ schemes. Most can be understood as the development of ‘self-build’ villages or streets, selling serviced building plots or a choice of pre-designed houses ‘off-plan’ to individuals. There is often some room for further customisation, with customers able to take existing house designs – which tend to have pre-approval in terms of planning permission – and alter it them using their own architect.

Groups of people that engage with emerging forms of Developer Enabled Custom Build tend not to know each other before buying-in to the development and, generally, don’t experience the development as ‘collective’. It could be observed that this version of Custom Build differs from traditional speculative house-building in that the developer secures sales before taking on the additional risk of constructing dwellings, passing on a cost-saving – and the opportunity for limited customisation – to individual customers on a multi-unit site. This model has significant overlaps with off-plan development models, but with a greater focus on customers – who would live in the development - rather than on investors.

The Self Build Portal makes relatively frequent announcements<sup>78</sup> about emerging schemes, led by developers on multi-unit sites, and features a small number of case studies of ‘developer-led group projects’ currently underway (Self Build Portal, 2013a).

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<sup>78</sup> See [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/latest-news](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/latest-news)

## Development Managers

### Igloo Regeneration

Igloo Regeneration has recently acquired a former Trevenson Park tin mine site in Cornwall from the HCA and plans to build a wide range of around 70 custom built homes in 2014/15 (NaSBA, 2013, p. 14), for which it will manage the development, including establishing a supply chain of 'home manufacturers' from which individuals and groups will be able to make specific arrangements for the procurement of their homes. Although the site will be 'multi-unit', the developer does not plan to target groups specifically in its marketing.

Anecdotally, Igloo are in negotiations with several local authorities and the Homes & Communities Agency to pilot Developer Enabled Custom Build on a number of large sites around the country, replicating key elements of the Homeruskwartier development at Almere in the Netherlands. There is considerable anecdotal evidence to suggest that a large scheme equivalent to the Homeruskwartier, if demonstrated as viable and successful, will catalyse something of a revolution in the house-building industry in the direction of greater diversity and business models placing greater emphasis on supporting enabled forms of self-provision.

### HAB Housing

HAB Housing are famously known as the development company founded by broadcaster Kevin McCloud, who is also the central Government's 'Self Build Champion', writing forewords to a number of significant publications by the Homes & Communities Agency and the National Self Build Association (HCA, 2012; NaSBA, 2011, 2012, 2013). Whilst HAB has previously completed a number of housing schemes, it now sees itself as the 'bridge between the custom-builder and the volume house builder' (Ramchurn, 2013) and aims to become a 'one-stop-shop for Self-build and Custom Finish projects' (HAB, 2013).

The most innovative aspect of HAB Housing's model is likely to be the way in it is 'crowd-funding'<sup>79</sup> the initial investment required to establish its Custom Build service, although it remains to be seen whether it applies the same innovative principals to funding individual developments.

### SolidSpace

SolidSpace markets itself around the particular architectural idea of split-level open-plan living (SolidSpace, 2013a), including renovations and new-builds of both the speculative and custom build variety.

A SolidSpace director is also vice-chair of NaSBA, and SolidSpace is developing a business strategy for supporting collective custom build, using their website as a 'match-making' service for those interested in custom build to form a group around a particular site opportunity for multi-unit or collective delivery. As well as filling in a web-based form to express an interest (SolidSpace, 2013b), prospective custom builders can identify themselves on an 'Opportunity Map' that reveals their location in relation to other interested households and 'scouted' or secured sites, as well as allowing them to outline the extent of the area in which they would like to live (SolidSpace, 2013c).

If enough interest is evidenced in a particular area, SolidSpace will use their expertise as developers in finding land and negotiating prices to secure a multi-unit site on behalf of a group of individuals, using up-front deposits to finance the purchase of the site (Zogolovitch, 2013).

The company has yet to complete any dwellings on site.

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<sup>79</sup> See relevant section in this study.

### Custom Self Build Ltd

Custom Self Build Ltd is a Development Contractor that specialises in multi-unit self-build housing projects across England; acquiring, designing, building and project managing residential schemes for self-builders and aiming to 'make self-build simpler'(Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013a).

The company will typically develop freehold homes for individual households, but also construct new homes for Registered Providers who support skills training through the construction work(Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013a), which is seen as a core element of the business(Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013b).

In the private model, deposits are first paid by buyers to secure their plot, before consultation with the local authority, site surveys and detailed designs are begun. Customers have a wide range of choices of design to choose from, rather like a menu in a restaurant. The completed 'shell' comes with the planning obligations and council levies, roads, sewers and utilities in place, and the company provide support right through to completion and Building Control 'sign-off'(Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013c).

Custom Self Build Ltd can also partner or 'co-work' with Local Authority and Registered Providers on sites where public land and buildings are made available to the company. A structured build programme enables mostly young adults (but not exclusively) to learn a trade, new team working skills and a new positive route to providing both housing and training as 'assisted' self builders, who also attend a trades or technical course at college (or similar establishment), and help to construct their own home by attending site alongside their site based 'mentor' for a minimum number of hours each week. Custom Self Build offer leadership and support throughout the entire duration of the project, acting as Principal Contractor, usually under a partnering or management form of contract(Custom Self Build Ltd, 2013b).

The company has yet to complete any dwellings on site.

### Bloc Plot

Plot, a subsidiary of developer bloc, publicise themselves as a Partnership Development Company set up to '*break down the barriers to people who are interested in custom and self-build opportunities*'(bloc, 2013a).

Bloc place an emphasis on Partnership working and aim to facilitate access to a range of services for self-providers, including providing serviced plots with or without planning approval, carrying out project management and/or construction, and accessing professional and financial services and information(bloc, 2013a), collecting these services at *dreamplot.net*(bloc, 2013a)where interested parties can also search for a plot in England & Wales, Scotland or Internationally and access a guide to 'the self-build process'.

Bloc's service seems to be marketed at individuals, with plots delivered on multi-unit sites, and currently offer plots in Lancaster, Cheshire and France(bloc, 2013b) and is currently on site with a14 home custom build scheme alongside the canal at Aldcliffe Road in Lancaster(NaSBA, 2013, p. 14).

### Wellstride

Welsh low-volume house-builder Wellstride is offering Custom Build at its 'self-build village' Church View in Bedwellty, Wales(Wellstride Limited, 2013).

A 13 acre site in Bedwellty was acquired in 2005 by a joint venture between an investor and local housebuilder, and promoted exclusively as an enabled development for 118 self build plots, some of which are reserved for 'affordable housing'. Partly as a strategy to reduce overhead and cash flow risk in the downturn, the approach now aims to yield premium plot prices. Purchasers buy serviced plots, subject to a strict construction management code agreed with the Council, and can draw on the joint



venture or other local contractors as required. Typical fully serviced plots cost £105,000(NaSBA, 2011, p. 9).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering history, planning and construction, finance, time-scale, long-term outcomes and learning points – **here**(Self Build Portal, 2013b), but at the time of writing the project is on hold.

## Home Manufacturers

### Fairgrove Homes

Although the Fairgrove model of Developer-Led Custom Build involves the initial purchase of land by the developer, no homes are built until a group of people can be identified to buy them. Fairgrove will then build from a discrete, pre-determined range of options, allowing some customization by the end-user within the planning permission already given in the original application for the site(McKenna, 2013).

Fairgrove Homes are also one of the first successful applicants to the HCA Custom Build Homes Fund to kick-start projects in Morton, Derbyshire (HCA, 2013, 2012).

Fairgrove Homes are also developing a small site of three custom build homes at Hucknall, also in Derbyshire. The serviced plots (each with planning permission for four or five bed homes) start at £150,000. A range of standard house types can be constructed on the plots (and the potential owners can adjust the internal layout). Homes can be built to waterproof stage (typical cost then will be £357,500), or built out to completion (typical cost £425,000). The company has another site nearby where nine more modest homes are planned. Serviced plots here will start from £78,000(NaSBA, 2013, p. 14).

The company has yet to complete any dwellings on site at the time of writing.

### Urban Self Build(Urban Self Build, 2013a)

The Urban Self Build model offers three choices to Custom Build customers under the banner 'your home your way': building a design 'off-plan' that already has planning consent using traditional or 'turn-key' packages, adapting a permitted design within a design code agreed with the Local Authority, or gaining their own detailed planning permission within the agreed design code on a serviced plot(Urban Self Build, 2013a).

Urban Self Build are also a successful applicant to the HCA Custom Build Homes Fund, to kick-start a project at Hempstead Green in Peterborough(Urban Self Build, 2013b).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study covering key points – **here**(Self Build Portal, 2013c) and although the partners have completed multi-unit self-build schemes in previous incarnations, Urban Self Build has yet to complete any dwellings on site at the time of writing.

### CornerstoneZED

CornerstoneZED is a social investment company formed in a partnership between environmentally-orientated 'enabling' and commercial developer ZEDprojects(ZEDfactory, 2013) and social investor and mutual fund Cornerstone(Cornerstone, 2013).

CornerstoneZED is leading the Bickleigh Down Eco Village (Bickleigh, 2012) project near Plymouth in Devon, which will provide 91 homes and is one of the largest self build developments in the UK (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

There will also be a kit home assembly facility (which will create 33 jobs), a green building store, cafes, shops and business space (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

The energy efficient kit homes have been designed so that each can generate enough income from the solar power they produce to cancel out any utility bills (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

The house design offers self builders lots of choice over size, layout and finish as it is based on a flexible kit of panels. Cornerstone is also exploring the possibility of a 'self finish' option – where it constructs the homes to watertight stage, and self builders finish them off. Work is expected to begin on site in summer 2013 (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

The company has yet to complete any dwellings on site at the time of writing.

### Kingspan-Potton

Kingspan Potton are one of Britain's leading kit home suppliers and it regularly works with land owners or local authorities to provide tailored solutions to specific challenges. Although the organisation is best known for its larger bespoke homes it can also provide (via the Kingspan connection) much more modest and affordable homes too (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

### BoKlok

This is a division of Ikea that works with contractor Skanska to provide modestly priced 'flat packed' homes. It has completed one UK project so far (57 homes in Gateshead where two bed townhouses cost from £125,000 each) (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15), although this development was procured speculatively.

### Concept2 Group

Concept2 Group offer Custom Build ('chosen by you') alongside Bespoke ('working with you') and Premier ('made for you') homes (Concept2 Group, 2013), describing a range of '*flexible build options*' including serviced plots with or without outline and/or detailed planning permission, watertight shell, fully finished, or varying extents of interior décor, alongside a number of flexible purchase options. The company also offers to find land on behalf of custom builders.

Concept2 Group offer little indication of their capacity to support a collective custom building group and like other Custom Build Developers, its service seems to be marketed at individuals, and may or may not be delivered as part of a multi-unit site.

The company has yet to complete any dwellings on site at the time of writing.

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# 9C EMERGING SUPPORTED COMMUNITY SCHEMES

## EMERGING SUPPORTED COMMUNITY CUSTOM BUILD SCHEMES

There are a number of emerging Supported Community Custom Build proposals currently being explored and implemented by public and third sector organisations, or by development partnerships.

According to Ted Stevens, Chair of the National Self Build Association, around 20 housing associations - and 45 local authorities - are currently looking at some form of self-build delivery (Stevens, 2013). Given the growing momentum and noise around the idea, and pace at which new schemes are coming forward, this is likely to have increased since the time of writing.

Examples include smaller-scale 'Enabled' and 'Assisted' Community Custom Build proposals as well as likely large-scale models currently in development. Some pioneers in the field - such as the partnership between Bristol City Council, Knightstone Housing Association and the Community Self Build Agency - have already completed schemes and are planning further developments.

### Assisted Community Custom Build

#### Land Society, Devon

The Land Society is a non-profit, rural housing initiative, established as an umbrella organisation to support the development of local Community Land Trusts and involving – to date – approximately 80 families in around a dozen small villages across Devon.

The Land Society seeks to assist small groups of local people, on modest incomes, in getting together, in groups of between 5 and 20 households, to deliver a new, two-or-three-bed home whilst attending a part time training course at local college. Properties work out at Works out at around £100k including land, all materials and training (Stevens, 2013) typically less than half the price of an existing property in the area of the same size (Stevens, 2013). At present around 15 parish councils in Devon have projects in the pipeline, with the first homes due to go on site at the end of 2013 (NaSBA, 2013, p. 16). Many local authorities across Devon support the project and so far around 150 families have signed up (Ibid. 2013, p. 18).

Community Land Trusts are seen as a key mechanism for maintaining affordability in perpetuity, and are able to take ownership of parish council land to build homes, whilst the Land Societies latest initiative is to develop a low cost sustainable eco-home that is purpose designed to be very easy for novice self builders to construct (Self Build Portal, 2013).

The Land Society starts by organising local public meetings, and then helps potential self builders to identify and acquire a suitable site; generally land adjacent to the village but not identified for open market development. The Society offers £10,000 from the total budget of each home towards the cost of each plot, so if five homes are going to be built on an acre of land, the land-owner will receive no more than £50,000. To date it has not proved to be difficult to secure low cost sites in rural Devon (NaSBA, 2013, p. 18).

A Community Land Trust is then created, which holds the Option on the land, becomes the 'developer', employs the Land Society to handle everything, and ends up owning 25% of each home. This, the planning rules and the allocation policy ensure that the homes will always remain affordable

should any of the self builders decide to move on at a later stage. Those that want to take part must pay a £5,000 deposit, but this is all the cash they have to put down as the initiative values the self builders' efforts, doing all the construction work, as being worth 25% of the total cost of the project. This means they do not have to raise a normal deposit as they would if they had a conventional mortgage (NaSBA, 2013, p. 18).

The self builders are supported by a part-time training course and plenty of technical help on how to build their home from start to finish, delivered by one of eight local Further Education partner colleges across the South West. The normal course lasts a year for those that are building their homes in their spare time, although a shorter course may be set up for those that are able to build on a full-time basis. The course covers 12 main stages of building work. Materials are delivered to the site at each of the 12 stages of the build – but only once the previous stage has been signed off for all the houses. The team from the Land Society provides technical support and monitors the quality of the work (Ibid. 2013, p. 18).

At the end of the project, participants own 25% from the 'sweat equity' of building their own house, buy the next 50% using a mortgage at a cost of around £590 per month, and the remaining 25% is held by their local CLT in perpetuity. By comparison; a typical three bedroom home in rural Devon costs about £750 a month to rent, and well over £200,000 to buy (Ibid. 2013, p. 18).

The Self Build Portal has a written case study, covering history, planning and construction, how it works and progress updates – [here](#) (Self Build Portal, 2013).

#### K1, Orchard Park, Cambridge, UK.

Orchard Park is a sizable urban extension located in the north of Cambridge, being taken forward with Cambridge City Council as land-owner. Most of the area has already been developed with conventional house-builders. However it has been difficult to achieve sufficient interest and values for the last remaining parcels, due to the economic climate (Hill, 2013a, 2013b; Roberts, 2012, p. 22).

This project has been supported by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, who have jointly funded an enabling team with representatives from specialist consultancies - Instinctively Green, C20 Future Planners and Cambridgeshire Architectural Research. NaSBA describe the initiative as follows:

*“The councils identified a site for potentially 40 homes on the northern edge of Cambridge and the consultants have been recruiting local people to form a group. They are also running ‘visioning workshops’ to help the potential residents decide exactly what they want to build, and they have been developing detailed costing and feasibility studies. The consultants have also identified some keen contractors who will build the whole development (the contractors will also partly fund the construction work). The residents will then take out mortgages to repay the builders. The aim is to get everything sorted and start on site in mid-2013, with completion a year later.”*

(NaSBA, 2013, p. 8)

The London Legacy Development Corporation – conducting their own research into Custom Build precedent initiatives - have written a synopsis of Orchard Park in their report ‘*Custom-Build Housing: An alternative model for development on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*’:

*“In 2010 the City Council decided to proceed with the disposal of the K1 site in Orchard Park by way of an enabled self build co-housing scheme. This involves providing houses in partnership with an established house builder for outright individual ownership with collective ownership of the public realm. This approach is a version of the model used in Tübingen in Germany, where a developer carries out the enabling role as local authorities in the UK are not often in a position to undertake development risks. The developers interested in this approach are likely to be smaller or niche house-builders with an interest in higher quality or more sustainable homes. They will forego some of their usual profit as the project risks are shared across the*

*future households involved, and the profit may come on the build cost rather than the scheme overall.*

*The City Council has begun to establish a group of residents for K1, building on local interest from existing cohousing groups and housing co-operatives. The City Council then plans to procure a development partner to design and build a scheme in close liaison with the confirmed and committed K1 co-housing group. The development partner would develop an integrated housing and landscape vision and sell to the individual purchasers in the usual way.*

*Purchasers arrange their own mortgages and pay for homes on completion. Each sale document would require purchasers to become members of a not for profit Resident Management Company, which would own the common areas and benefit from covenants requiring households to pay a service charge for the upkeep and development of the common areas and maintenance charges. Following initial soft market testing, 7 households have expressed strong interest in the scheme. A further 13 are interested but have questions regarding the finer detail. The next step is to ensure that a suitable housebuilder is procured in the enabling role."*

(Roberts, 2012, p. 22).

### Others

A number of other Assisted Community Custom Build initiatives are also emerging.

In Barnet in North London a group of elderly women - called Older Women's Cohousing, or OWCH - are building a 25-home, mutually supportive retirement project in partnership with Hanover Housing Association (NaSBA, 2013, p. 13).

In Northumbria, Allendale Community Homes has established a CLT, bought a site and then entered into a lease-and-leaseback agreement with Homes for Northumberland (HfN) to build 22 two and three bed houses, apartments and bungalows. The project was enabled by a HCA grant and long term loan secured by HfN that the CLT would have been unable to obtain itself. The head lease will be surrendered when the CLT is able to refinance the outstanding loan on its own account (NaSBA, 2011, p. 9).

In Scotland, the Highlands Small Communities Housing Trust provides low cost loans to help self builders get their projects off the grounds – typically it offers between £5,000 and £20,000 (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

### Enabled Community Custom Build

#### Build! Programme at Cherwell District Council, UK

Cherwell District Council no longer owns any housing stock of its own (Cherwell District Council, 2013) but its Build! Programme aims to offer affordable rented homes, affordable home ownership (shared ownership and equity loans) and homes sold on the open market (Build! Programme and Cherwell District Council, 2013).

To date, the Build! Programme has completed a number of predominantly self-finish projects, such as those at Juniper Court and West Street in Banbury, that are bringing vacant homes back into use using co-ordinated sweat-equity of people on Cherwell's housing waiting list (NaSBA, 2013, p. 11).

At Newton Close in Bicester, twenty one self finish homes are being delivered here as part of a much larger self build initiative piloted by Cherwell District Council. The council is currently looking for potential residents and is keen to recruit people with existing construction trades. Work is due to start in early 2014 and the homes will be available on a part rent/ part ownership arrangement (NaSBA, 2013, p. 17).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Cherwell may well be the location for the first UK-equivalent of the large-scale, local authority enabled self-build development at the Homeruskwartier in Almere, the Netherlands, whilst the authority is widely considered a pace-setter in facilitating opportunities for citizens to provide their own homes, an accolade commonly attributed to its proactive Housing Team and enthusiastic elected Mayor.

### Urban Pioneers, Middlesborough

A number of sources suggest that Custom Build – of other property types as well as homes – is a central strand of the regeneration strategy for the Middlehaven district of Middlesborough (Bomken et al., 2013; HCA, 2013; NaSBA, 2013, p. 6; Wunderlich and Campbell, 2013). NaSBA describe the initiative as:

*“ ... [involving] a prominent site near the River Tees, where space to accommodate around 15 large building plots (or roughly 40 homes/work spaces) have been identified on either side of a new park close to the town’s distinctive Transporter Bridge. The team behind the initiative is the HCA and the local council, and it is seeking to attract go-getters who are looking for an affordable site to build a home on. In addition to providing the land at zero initial cost, it is also offering loans and technical assistance to those interested in taking part.*

*A master plan has been drawn up for the area, and the new self build homes are seen as a way of stimulating interest and getting some building/economic activity underway. Each of the fully serviced plots is 15x30m (so they could take more than one home) and those that get involved can build pretty much what they like – a one-off home for themselves, an office or work spaces, a mixture of both or small developers can construct a terrace or a block of flats.*

*The land is offered on a ‘deferred payment’ basis (so its effectively free up front, though this approach means the value of the land can be realised at a later stage). The council and the HCA are paying for the provision of services, and are supporting the project by agreeing to take payment for the land later on. They are also considering offering three of the plots for free, as a way of generating interest and encouraging people to come forward with their proposals. There will be a set of simple rules or a basic design code, but the team doesn’t want to make this too onerous as it’s looking for innovative proposals and creative ideas to kick start regeneration.”*

(NaSBA, 2013, p. 6)

### London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC)

The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) is in a unique position – and example of a specially created planning authority, tasked with the regeneration of a significant area of east London associated with the creation of the London 2012 Olympic Park, and simultaneously landowner, regeneration agency, and planning authority. The LLDC is keen to explore whether self-build or custom build homes can be included in the transformation of the Olympic Park from Games mode to Legacy mode, which includes a commitment to provide a significant amount of housing across the Park. It has hired a team to assess demand levels and then work out what type/size of homes might be included, how to identify potential would-be self builders and how to fund the scheme (NaSBA, 2013, p. 8).

### Others

A number of other Enabled Community Custom Build initiatives are emerging across the country.

Stoke City Council, Shropshire County Council<sup>80</sup>, Teignbridge District Council<sup>81</sup>, Hastings Borough Council<sup>82</sup> and Orkney Island Council<sup>83</sup> are all known to be pursuing Custom Build strategies, or enabling self-builders directly through land allocation, and short summaries feature in recent NaSBA publications.

'Self-finish' is a popular custom build strategy for Local Authorities, probably due to its potential to reduce some of the risk. For example, four 'shell finish' homes are being constructed by the Orwell Housing Association, at Elizabeth Way in Felixstowe, aimed at local families on modest incomes. Potential residents have been involved in discussions about the design and interior layout options. More than 30 families enquired about securing one of the homes. Contractors are now constructing the shells to 'first fix' stage, at which point the self-builders will finish them off. The housing association believes many of the potential residents will have contacts in the construction trade that will help them get good deals on materials and thereby make additional savings

They also believe the four residents will do a lot of skill swapping – so if one ends up being a plasterer, and another an electrician, they will both work on each other's houses to mutual benefit. A rough estimate suggests that the finished two-bed dwellings will be worth £135,000 to £140,000, and the finished three-bed homes about £155,000. The 'self finishers' will save between 5 and 25% on this – depending on how much work they end up doing (NaSBA, 2013, p. 17).

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<sup>80</sup> Shropshire County Council - People in housing need are able to build a house as their plot is treated as an exception site. The house must be less than 100m<sup>2</sup> (internal area) and legal agreements are required to ensure it remains 'affordable' in perpetuity. This policy is providing 10% of the affordable housing in the area, with a steady stream of 20 to 25 homes per year coming forward (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

<sup>81</sup> Teignbridge District Council are using land designation to support collective custom build. This part of the UK is in high demand from would-be self-builders, but suitable building plots are not easy to find. The council has little land of its own that it can offer up, so it has introduced a requirement that 5% of all sites of 20+ homes must be set aside for self-builders. The first project affected by this policy - at Kingsteignton – has already identified eight potential plots for self-builders. The council is also enthusiastically supporting the Land Society – a not-for-profit organisation that is helping to provide low-cost self-build homes in a number of villages across the council's patch. The Society has teamed up with South Devon College to provide a bespoke self-build training course as part of this initiative and more than 150 families have signed up for it. In addition the council is setting up a fighting fund to help it purchase land that it can then split up into serviced plots and sell on to self-builders (NaSBA, 2013, p. 15).

<sup>82</sup> Hastings Borough Council - Two serviced plots are being sold at Ore in a pioneering scheme organised in conjunction with the HCA. In total there is scope to build around ten homes on the land (NaSBA, 2013, p. 16).

<sup>83</sup> There is a long tradition of providing serviced plots in the Highlands and Islands. This latest initiative is for ten plots at the settlement of St Margaret's Hope, where the plot prices will be between £30,000 and £37,000 (NaSBA, 2013, p. 16).



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# 10 STATUTE & POLICY

## CURRENT STATUTE AND POLICY CREATE FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

There have been a number of recent developments in central Government policy and statutory legislation that not only create favourable conditions for, but could also be fulfilled by, the continued development of Collective Custom Build housing as viable, mainstream way of procuring housing.

These include:

- The publication of '*Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*' by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG), which includes references to 'self-build' and is evidence that central Government acknowledges the need for a different way to deliver housing (DCLG, 2011, pp. 1–4);
- The introduction of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG, 2012)<sup>84</sup> which places a duty on local authorities to identify and provide for those that wish to build their own homes;
- The launch of the *Custom Build Homes Fund* (HCA, 2012) by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA), which makes financial incentives available to 'multi-unit', 'custom build' pilot schemes;

Some sources also highlight the opportunities presented by the recent redefinition of the *Community Right To Build* to include access to a dedicated support fund for community groups that wish to develop designs and build houses<sup>85</sup> (GOV.UK, 2013), and the underlying framework presented by the *Public Services (Social Value) Act* (UK Government, 2012), which helps local authorities account for social value when auditing an evaluating proposals and decisions and offers an opportunity to support local, independent housing solutions over those from volume house-builders<sup>86</sup>.

Many recent developments can be attributable – directly or indirectly – to the activity of the Self-Build Government-Industry Working Group, which published *An Action Plan to Promote the Growth of Self-Build Housing* (NaSBA, 2011), in association with the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) in 2011. The '*Action Plan...*' principally encourages local authorities to use self-build as a way of helping to deliver sustainable, affordable housing, and includes research conducted by the DCLG to understand how the self-build sector operates in Australia, Germany, Holland, Ireland, Scotland and the US (Owen et al., 2011).

Since the launch of '*An Action Plan...*' and the subsequent publication of the *Housing Strategy*, the Working Group has been working to progress the main recommendations set out in *An Action Plan...*, under the new identity of the Self Build Implementation Group, and with the support of NaSBA. On the 19th April 2012, NaSBA presented '*A Progress Report to Government on the Implementation of the Action Plan to the Minister for Housing and Local Government*' (NaSBA, 2012). The Progress Report describes initiatives such as meetings with contractors and lenders, special workshops for planning

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<sup>84</sup> Read a commentary on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from the Royal Town Planning Institute in (RTPI, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Specifically, this now includes pre-application support from consultants, such as architects, sustainability specialists and developers as eligible costs in preparing schemes.

<sup>86</sup> A guide to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 is available in (Social Enterprise UK, 2012). Chevin notes that under the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, organisations like housing associations must define the social and economic value and impact of the services they offer, when tendering for a contract from a local authority or another relevant body (Chevin, 2013, p. 31). The HM Treasury also provides advice on how to account for social value in auditing and evaluating its investments and decision-making, in its Green Book (HM Treasury, 2003), which has a recently updated section on the topic taking into account the latest available research.

officers and the preparation of a comprehensive Self Build Portal<sup>87</sup> to assist all future would-be self-builders. In addition more than £100,000 worth of support has also been provided by many of the self-build industry's leading organisations to help fund some of these initiatives (Ibid. 2012, p. 3), and NaSBA continues to monitor the growth of the 'self-build' sector in association with the Self Build Implementation Group.

## Laying The Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England

In *Laying The Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*, central Government acknowledges the need for a different way to deliver housing (DCLG, 2011, pp. 1–4) and sets out a policy ambition of increasing self-build homes from 100,000 to 200,000 over the next decade (Ibid. 2011, p. 9).

The Self-Build Government-Industry Working Group's *An Action Plan to Promote the Growth of Self-Build Housing* directly influenced the development of the *Housing Strategy*, securing the inclusion of an entire section on Custom Build (NaSBA, 2011, pp. 14–16) - a newly introduced term referring generally to 'self-build' - driving a shift in the terminology used within the house-building industry to refer to self-provided housing. The *Housing Strategy* also included the announcement of the £30m Custom Build Loan Fund and the policy of making public land available for self-builders, both of which were direct recommendations of the Self-Build Government-Industry Working Group.

## National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Self-Build Government-Industry Working Group's *An Action Plan to Promote the Growth of Self-Build Housing* also directly influenced the final form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published on 27 March 2012 (DCLG, 2012)<sup>88</sup>. The NPPF is a key part of central Government's planning reforms, designed to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth (GOV.UK, 2012; RTPI, 2013), reportedly simplifying the number of policy pages about planning from more than 1000 pages of planning guidance to around 50 (McCann, 2012).

The framework acts as guidance for local planning authorities and decision-takers, both in drawing up plans and making decisions about planning applications (GOV.UK, 2012) and therefore has significant influence in how Local Authorities deliver planning policy.

Paragraph 159 of the NPPF places a duty on local authorities to assess the local needs of 'those that want to build their own home' alongside the needs of other distinct groups, as well as make provision for that demand. It also introduces the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as the means of carrying out these duties, describing the duty as being to:

Paragraph 159 of the NPPF describes the duty as being to:

*'...prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period which:*

*- ...meets household and population projections, taking account of migration and demographic change;*

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<sup>87</sup> This initiative has since been launched - see [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk) (Self Build Portal, 2013).

<sup>88</sup> Read a commentary on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from the Royal Town Planning Institute in (RTPI, 2013).

- *...addresses the need for all types of housing, including affordable housing and the needs of different groups in the community (such as, but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and **people wishing to build their own homes**); and*
- *...caters for housing demand and the scale of housing supply necessary to meet this demand.'*

(Emphasis added: DCLG, 2012, pp. 38–39)

The significance of the inclusion of a reference to self-build in the NPPF is highlighted by Ted Stevens, Chair of the National Self Build Association, who states:

*“Self Build/Custom Build is set to grow in a new planning policy context. It’s real Localism; the Big Society in action. It gives people more choice and better value and it makes housing affordable for a new generation. Innovative group projects deliver fantastic communities that we can all learn from.”*

(Stevens, 2013a)

There is some anecdotal uncertainty from local authorities in applying SHMAs and SHLAAs in practice and available guidance on what constitutes evidence of demand is described as very open and discretionary<sup>89</sup>.

## HCA Custom Build Homes Fund

The Custom Build Homes Fund was announced as part of *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*, which established £30 million of support, made available to provide short-term project finance to ‘custom build’ sector on a repayable basis and designed to unlock ‘*group Custom Build Home projects which can experience difficulties in accessing conventional loan finance*’ (DCLG, 2011, p. 15).

The Custom Build Homes Fund is intended for group Custom Build Projects, which it defines as:

*‘...where developers build group schemes for clients on multi-unit sites or where registered housing providers work with self organised community groups and a developer or contractor to bring forward a multi-unit custom build home project.’*

(HCA, 2012, p. 6).

As such, it has been criticised for preferencing Custom Build Developers over independent self-providing groups<sup>90</sup>.

The Revolving Loan initiative is supported by a programme of land promotion, with agencies such as the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and Greater London Authority (GLA) looking at bringing sites forward across the country specifically for ‘self-build’, with particular preference for multi-unit proposals to be delivered on those sites (Stevens, 2013b).

<sup>89</sup> Evidence drawn from Motivating Collective Custom Build Focus Group workshop, held at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2013 (Brown et al., 2013).

<sup>90</sup> Significant concerns were raised in response to a presentation by Andy Nelson of the HCA on the progress of the Custom Build Homes programme at EcoBuild 2013 who, - although describing the progress of the programme as meeting expectations - could not confirm whether any independently-established self-providing groups had been able to access support (Nelson, 2013).

The latest comprehensive spending review<sup>91</sup> from central Government has further consolidated the role of the HCA, now designated as the single point of contact for centralised disposal of Government land holdings to ensure land is released efficiently (HM Treasury, 2013, pp. 41–42). This new status could enhance its capacity to make land available specifically for Collective Custom Build schemes, particular large-scale enabled schemes led jointly by local authorities and private developers, which offer the most promising opportunity to test continental models of volume self-provision in the UK.

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<sup>91</sup> Also referred to as the CSR, or Spending Round.

# 11 POPULAR CULTURE

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

There is a growing awareness - and application - in mainstream popular culture of alternative means of production and consumption. Groups of people are finding new ways to come together - both digitally and physically - to engage directly in the means of production and consumption of products that would ordinarily be expected to be provided entirely by others, and to emphasise participatory governance and user-led procurement.

Interest is growing in alternative models of housing development whereby a community group takes the lead in developing housing. Groups often form – or consolidate themselves – around a core idea such as self-providing affordable homes<sup>92</sup>, a strong environmental agenda<sup>93</sup>, or simply through a shared community of need or interest, such as groups of single-parent families<sup>94</sup>. In many cases, the procurement of a bespoke housing solution is often integral to the wider lifestyle or economic aspirations of the founding group's members.

Becoming constituted as a legal entity is commonly cited as a critical factor in enabling community groups to interact with legal, financial, institutional and other professionals within the construction industry<sup>95</sup>. The lack of such a constitution - and means to consolidate potentially fractious group dynamics - in a group that seeks to self-provide housing can be seen as a barrier to ultimate success.

Some alternative development models have established precedent bases in the UK and are represented by national 'umbrella organisations'. In particular, the Cohousing movement has an established support structure in the form of UK Cohousing Network (UK Cohousing Network, 2013a), which maintains links with other national and international organisations, as does the Community Land Trust movement, via the National CLT Network (National CLT Network, 2013). These organisations offer support to groups in becoming constituted, although there is an acknowledged need for localised, on-the-ground support in the form of other umbrella organisations that can provide face-to-face support. Examples of these - such as Cornwall CLT Ltd (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a; and Moore and Northcott, 2010), and The Land Society (The Land Society, 2013) in Devon – have successfully supported community groups in taking ownership of land and building houses, whilst emerging initiatives exist in Bristol (Bristol CLT, 2013), London (East London Community Land Trust, 2013) and the North East of England (Bomken et al., 2013).

Other constitutional models, such as Mutual Home Ownership Societies (MHOSs) are less established in the UK, but still have representative precedent examples, such as the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) scheme in Leeds (LILAC, 2013).

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<sup>92</sup> Providing affordable homes was a key objective of the Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) group in Leeds, and of the St Minver CLT group in Rock, Cornwall, amongst others.

<sup>93</sup> The Lancaster Cohousing group set out to develop higher-performance energy-efficient, Passivhaus homes, which ultimately cost the same as an equivalent property in the area of an inferior specification.

<sup>94</sup> The LUU 'Baugruppen' in Berlin has been formed by a group of single-parent families seeking mutual support (Chan, 2010, p. 59).

<sup>95</sup> This point was discussed at length during the Motivating Collective Custom Build stakeholder workshop, held at Ash Sakula Architects in London on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Ash et al., 2013), and has been corroborated in a number of presentations - and accompanying Q+A sessions - made by key figures connected to the housing industry (S. Hill, 2013a, 2013b; Moore, 2013; Urban Design Group, 2013 and others.)

There is also a growing interest in the potential for 'crowd-funding'<sup>96</sup>, 'pro-suming'<sup>97</sup> and models of collaborative consumption<sup>98</sup> - ideas already familiar in other fields, such as the music and hospitality industries<sup>99</sup> - to offer an opportunity to overcome the organisational challenge and financial risk traditionally associated with 'group self-build', particularly with regard to the difficulty of obtaining land, finance and planning permission (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 8). Whilst these models are untested in relation to procuring buildings, their potential is clear when considered in relation to alternative development models that allow groups to form in the physical - and legal - world, such as Cohousing, Community Land Trusts and MHOSs.

Some developers are already trying to harness the power of these technologies to help groups of custom builders coalesce. Custom Build Developer, SolidSpace, has set up a web-based system that - as well as allowing prospective customers to express an interest in having a house custom built for them<sup>100</sup> - also enables them to identify themselves on an 'Opportunity Map', revealing their location in relation to other interested households, and to development sites 'scouted' or secured by the developer, as well as allowing them to outline the extent of the area in which they would like to live (SolidSpace, 2013b). SolidSpace then use their expertise in identifying and securing development sites, whilst the group - made up of individuals - finances the project up front, sharing the risk of development with the developer and benefitting from the associating reward of cost savings. Developer HAB - famously associated with broadcaster Kevin McCloud - is using online investment website Crowdcube to raise finance for its Custom Build venture, in which it will help - and sometimes form - groups of people to directly procure customised homes (HAB, 2013; Ramchurn, 2013), whilst Brickstarter is an initiative that seeks to create an online platform for making suggestions about how to improve neighbourhoods or environments and then turn those proposals into projects (D. Hill, 2013; see also McGuirk, 2013).

There is clear potential for these models - with the right amount of supported - to provide a conduit for pro-development, community-led dialogue and models of ownership and governance that reflect aspirations for 'resident-owned communities', described by community-development expert Stephen Hill as:

*"[an aspiration for qualities such as]...neighbourliness; shared spaces; sustainable buildings; energy efficiency; limited car usage; food growing; genuine and permanent affordability; public benefit...and for these qualities to be normal."*

(S. Hill, 2013a)

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<sup>96</sup> The Wikipedia entry for 'Crowdfunding' - citing Ordanini et al. (2011) - describes it as 'the collective effort of individuals who network and pool their money, usually via the Internet, to support efforts initiated by other people or organizations'. The concept is sometimes alternately referred to as 'crowd financing', 'equity crowdfunding' or 'crowd-sourced fundraising' (Wikipedia, 2013a).

<sup>97</sup> The 'prosumer revolution' is described by Parvin et al. as being represented by platforms such as YouTube, Wordpress, Lulu, MySpace, AirBnB, Kickstarter and Wikipedia, that - driven largely by the internet and technologies that make it easier for ordinary people to both communicate and to produce things for themselves - empower large numbers of dispersed 'prosumers' that together form a powerful, high-volume sector of producers with the ability to aggregate their knowledge and collective purchasing power. (Parvin et al., 2011, pp. 8-9).

<sup>98</sup> The Wikipedia entry for 'Collaborative Consumption' - citing Botsman and Rogers (2010) - describes collaborative consumption as 'a class of economic arrangements in which participants share access to products or services, rather than having individual ownership', adding that it is often enabled by technology and peer communities (Wikipedia, 2013b).

<sup>99</sup> Zogolovitch highlights that Custom Build - facilitated by models of 'collaborative consumption' facilitated by digital technology and online platforms is likely to offer a credible alternative model for production and consumption in the house-building industry in the same way that AirBnB does for the hotel industry, that Youtube does for the broadcasting industry and that iTunes and others do for the music industry (Zogolovitch, 2013). Parvin et al. add Wordpress, Lulu and Wikipedia as examples that have introduced 'prosuming' - where producers are also consumers - to the journalism and publishing industries (Parvin et al., 2011, pp. 8-9). Facebook and Twitter represent tools that groups are able to use to meet each other, exchange ideas and consolidate themselves.

<sup>100</sup> Interested parties first fill out a fairly normal online form. See (SolidSpace, 2013a).

The mainstream application of such models could be politically desirable - offering an opportunity to overcome NIMBY-ism<sup>101</sup> and offer a politically-popular alternative to speculative house-building as well as a framework for on-going community participation in local governance.

## Cohousing

Cohousing is a type of collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their own neighbourhoods and are consciously committed to living as a community (Cohousing.org, 2013). LaFond et al. also add that ideally-defined Cohousing aims to 'develop inclusive living environments and new, attractive qualities of life', and implies that the group are experimenting with ecological building and models of mutual consumption that save energy and other resources (LaFond et al., 2012, p. 17).

Notably, Cohousing developments include private homes that contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to extensive common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground and a common house. The physical design of a cohousing development encourages both social contact and individual space (Cohousing.org, 2013; Devlin, 2013).

Originating in Denmark, with the first residents moving into a purpose built cohousing community at Saettedammen in the late 1960s - the concept of "living community" has spread worldwide. At the time of writing, there are 14 cohousing communities in the UK, hundreds across Denmark and the Netherlands and around 130 in the United States (UK Cohousing Network, 2013b, p. 3). Many more are in development in the UK and around the world, including Canada, Australia, Sweden, New Zealand, Germany, France, Belgium, Austria and elsewhere (Cohousing.org, 2013).

Notable UK examples of Cohousing groups that have provided all or some of their own housing include the Low Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) in Leeds, the Threshold Centre in Gillingham and the Lancaster Cohousing group in Lancaster.

The Cohousing Groups Directory - an online map maintained by the UK Cohousing Network<sup>102</sup> - not only identifies emerging groups, but also provides a conduit through which interested individuals and organisations can engage with groups and the UK Cohousing Network as an umbrella organisation (UK Cohousing Network, 2013c)

## Community Land Trusts

A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a local non-profit organisation created to act as the steward of land and buildings, on behalf of a community, holding it 'in common' so it can remain permanently affordable (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 103).

CLTs can be a critical part of the mechanism for providing permanently affordable, sustainable new communities, with application in suburban and urban, as well as rural contexts. In particular, they can allow Local Authorities and other public bodies to sell or lease public land in such a way as to ensure that it continues to offer affordable, sustainable housing in community interest (Ibid. 2011, p. 104).

Notable UK examples where CLTs have been critical in facilitating collective self-provision of housing include a number of schemes supported by the umbrella organisation, Cornwall CLT Ltd, such as St Minver and St Just-in-Roseland CLTs (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a, 2013b) . The UK's first urban CLT – the East London CLT - has recently been granted stewardship of a large site in Bow, east London, UK, upon which it intends to build houses for its members, as well as some that will be rented affordably to others (East London Community Land Trust, 2013).

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<sup>101</sup> Based upon an acronym for the phrase 'Not-In'My'Back'Yard'.

<sup>102</sup> see [www.cohousing.org.uk/groups](http://www.cohousing.org.uk/groups)



## Mutual Home Ownership Societies

A Mutual Home Ownership Society (MHOS) model allows a group to collectively own equity – or shares – in a co-operative that - in turn - owns their homes, rather than owning houses individually (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 109). Essentially, the co-operative is a development company that can purchase land and build houses and, as a constituted entity, can negotiate the basis on which they pay for land (e.g. slowly, over time) with the land-owner (e.g. a Local Authority). The MHOS model can allow individual households who could not otherwise afford it, to attract finance, build their homes and own a shares in them over time (Ibid. 2011, p. 109).

The strength of the MHOS model - set out by co-operatives expert David Rodgers in 2009, in a report entitled 'New Foundations' (Rodgers, 2009) - is that it separates the value of the land from the value of the houses built on it. This means they are not treated as speculative properties, but as consumer durables, like cars and dishwashers, with a certain useful lifetime and an initial cost which must be paid-off over a period of time (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 110) creating the opportunity to ensure they remain affordable despite volatile fluctuations in the land values.

MHOSs are less established in the UK, but still have representative precedent examples, such as the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) scheme in Leeds (LILAC, 2013)

## Combining development models

It is widely acknowledged that there are no prescriptive, defined 'types' of self-provided development and that various models – or parts of models – can be combined to open up a '*new field of possibility for ways of developing housing using self-provided models*' (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 124).

For example, the LILAC self-providing group are a Cohousing group that also uses a Mutual Home Ownership Society model to equitably facilitate access to housing for its members. Similarly, a Cohousing group might form to develop housing that affords a 'neighbourly' lifestyle, representing a constituted group of people that might build homes on land owned by a Community Land Trust, which may involve some of or all of the same group of people, and be formed to hold ownership of land in perpetuity on behalf on the local community, of which the Cohousing group are a part. A Community Land Trust could also be established to provide homes for affordable rent, providing housing for individuals and house-holds beyond the immediate membership of the CLT, as is the case with proposals made by the East London CLT (East London Community Land Trust, 2013).

In '*A Right To Build – The Next Mass-Housebuilding Industry*', Parvin et al. explore three scenarios under which housing can be developed using a combination of alternative development models (Parvin et al., 2011, pp. 123–143) whilst Hunter develops a series of similar models in '*Self Provided Housing - The long tailed future of housebuilding*' (Hunter, 2012, pp. 69–91).

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# 12 ACTIVE INDUSTRY

## COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD IS AN ACTIVE AND IDENTIFIABLE INDUSTRY

Although often described as 'niche' and perceived as small and somewhat professionally disparate, Collective Custom Build is part of a growing 'self-build' industry that is established, identifiable and active - and that already contributes over £3billion annually to the national economy (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3), building approximately 7% of all new housing in the UK (Homebuilding & Renovating Market Research, 2013a).

The National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and Self Build Portal<sup>103</sup> provide the sector with a recognisable industry body and common point of access for information, whilst significant sectors of the construction industry - such as offsite manufacturing<sup>104</sup> and the 'lending landscape' of banks, building societies and mortgage providers<sup>105</sup> - already see Collective Custom Build as an important emerging market worthy of attention.

As the Collective Custom Build sector of the self-provided housing industry develops, key stakeholders from the house-building and general construction industries are forming new partnerships, innovating across sectors to share risk and work mutually to respond to emerging opportunities.

### The National Self Build Association (NaSBA) and the Self Build Portal

The National Self Build Association (NaSBA) represent an active and accessible industry body, actively engaging in advocacy and research to support the development of the sector.

Current industry initiatives include:

**National Self Build Week** – the first of which took place in London in 2013, in partnership with the large construction industry trade show, Grand Designs Live (NaSBA, 2013a).

**Self Build Portal** – an industry-funded, web-based, central point of access about how to understand promote and develop self-provided housing (Self Build Portal, 2013; Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 10).

**Campaigning / Publication** – a series of campaigning and educational articles in key self-build magazines, for instance on the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 10).

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<sup>103</sup> See [www.nasba.org.uk](http://www.nasba.org.uk) and [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk)

<sup>104</sup> The 'Offsite Housing Review' published by the Construction Industry Council (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013) makes a number of recommendations for 'building better houses, faster' (Ibid. 2013, p. 2), and defines 'offsite' as 'involving substantial factory manufacturing intervention to add to project value' (Ibid. 2013, p. 4). As counter-point to the common perception of the house-building industry as resistant to change, it points out that a number of offsite solutions are already extensively used within the house-building industry, and makes significant reference to both the opportunities presented to the sector by the 'self-build' market, and the need to diversify the skill-base of the UK's construction workforce with regard to workmanship and higher environmental performance standards.

<sup>105</sup> Significant recent research into the role of and opportunities for financial institutions with regard to self-build, published by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York, was commissioned by Lloyds Banking Group and given a high-profile Parliamentary Launch, hosted by Richard Bacon MP, Chair of the newly formed All-Party Group on Self-Build. See 'Build-it-yourself? - Understanding the changing landscape of the UK self-build market' (Wallace et al., 2013).

## Offsite Manufacturing and Collective Custom Build

Some sources draw particular attention to the opportunities afforded by advances in offsite manufacture to de-risk individual and collective self-build schemes from the point of view of lenders and development partners, and grow the Collective Custom Build sector by establishing supply chains orientated towards the needs of collective custom builders. Offsite-manufactured 'flat-pack' homes are described by various sources as offering cost-savings and faster build times, as well as allowing greater control over build quality, which in turn can lead to increased environmental performance and longevity, and reduced occurrence of defects (Bomken et al., 2013; Wainwright, 2013; Stevens, 2013; NaSBA, 2013b; Parvin et al., 2011; Owen et al., 2011; ArchiHaus, 2013; BoKlok, 2013; ModCell, 2013; Urban Self Build, 2013 and others).

The '*Offsite Housing Review*' published by the Construction Industry Council (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013) makes a number of recommendations for '*building better houses, faster*' (Ibid. 2013, p. 2), and defines 'offsite' as '*involving substantial factory manufacturing intervention to add to project value*' (Ibid. 2013, p. 4). As counter-point to the common perception of the house-building industry as resistant to change, Miles and Whitehouse point out that:

*"... a number of offsite solutions are already extensively used within the house-building industry. For example almost all new low-rise homes will be built using factory manufactured truss-rafters for the construction of pitched roofs. Similarly there is ubiquitous use of factory-finished windows and doors and there is, of course, significant use of factory manufactured timber-frame walling systems of various forms. Accordingly there is plenty of evidence to demonstrate that the house-building industry is receptive to the use of offsite construction solutions where it is in their commercial interests to do so."*

(Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 4)

The report also makes significant reference to both the opportunities presented to the sector by the 'self-build' market, and the need to diversify the skill-base of the UK's construction workforce with regard to workmanship and higher environmental performance standards.

*"With volume house-builders predicting they could increase production only to around 100,000 new homes per year using traditional methods of site-based construction and acknowledgement that the traditional skill-base of the UK construction workforce is in long term decline, there is a clear opportunity to develop new technological solutions to housing delivery that also diversify the labour market."*

(Ibid. 2013, p. 4)

Offsite manufacturing of housing is already well-established in a wide range of other countries. Japanese prefabricated house manufacturers, for example are described by Parvin et al. as more like electronics or car manufacturers<sup>106</sup> in the degree of quality and customisation offered (2011, p. 53). An established 'home manufacturing' sector is also widely cited as a critical factor in the success of large-scale, self-provided housing development at the Homeruskwartier in Almere, Netherlands, as well as in much of the rest of Western Europe, Scandinavia, and North America (Miles and Whitehouse, 2013, p. 15), with established offsite home manufacturing industries typically found in any housing market that has an established self-provided housing sector. A recent proposal in the Dutch city of Nijmegen seeks to prototype innovative working partnerships between architects and 'kit-home manufacturers' to develop volume-build models of affordable housing (Wainwright, 2013).

In the UK, the BoKlok prefabricated system offered by IKEA has the potential to offer high environmental performance at an affordable price, but so far has only been used in speculative development (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 53), whilst the Low-Impact Living Affordable Community (LILAC) self-providing group has successfully used the ModCell system (ModCell, 2013; Roberts et al., 2010) of

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<sup>106</sup> According to Parvin et al. some companies are indeed electronic or car manufacturers who have diversified into the housing market (Parvin et al., 2011, p. 53).

straw-bale and timber panels - fabricated in a locally-deployed 'flying-factory' - to construct their Collective Custom Build scheme in Leeds (LILAC, 2013).

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# 13 POLITICAL WAVE

## THERE IS STRONG CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL INTEREST IN COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

There is a political wave of support for self-provided housing solutions - such as Collective Custom Build – which is due in no small part to the added value that can be achieved in terms of other policy objectives by procuring housing in this way – such as providing meaningfully affordable housing, strengthening local communities and economies and engaging people with an environmental agenda.

Successive Housing Ministers have voiced support for the ‘self-build’ sector, described as a reflection of the Government’s Localism agenda<sup>107</sup> (Building Societies Association, 2012, p. 3; Stevens, 2013a, 2013b) and central Government shows clear intention to implement the recommendations of the Government-Industry Self-Build Working Group, which secured consideration for ‘Custom Build’ in the latest UK central Government Housing Strategy (DCLG, 2011)<sup>108</sup> and prompted the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) to actively engage in research about self-build housing practices internationally (Owen et al., 2011).

At the time of writing, there has been a public commitment to form an All Party Group on Self-Build and Independent Housing<sup>109</sup> to *‘raise awareness and promote a better understanding of the Self-Build sector among MPs’*<sup>110</sup>, whilst the Communities and Local Government Select Committee has already made an inquiry into, and report on, the financing of new housing supply - highlighting that *‘Government, local authorities and lenders must work together to remove the barriers that currently restrict self-build and commit to getting pilot schemes underway very quickly’* (Betts, 2013). The committee also recommended that Government *‘establish a fund to incentivise local authorities to support pilot “volume self build” schemes by allocating sites and taking a flexible approach to planning’*; adding that there is *‘no reason why the first pilots could not be up and running in two years’ time [by]...2014’* (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2012).

There is also serious speculation in central Government as to the role that policy can play in developing a more diverse housing market. Think-tank, the Policy Exchange recently proposed a self-build policy that it argues could be as big and popular as Right-to-Buy<sup>111</sup>, detailing the political value in adopting a policy that could be both effective and popular:

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<sup>107</sup> Within the localism framework, represented by the Localism Act 2012 and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local authorities are encouraged to respond to their community’s needs and preferences, including the needs of those that wish to build their own homes.

<sup>108</sup> See also ‘Statute & Policy’ in this study.

<sup>109</sup> All Party Groups (APGs) are informal, cross-party, interest groups that have no official status within Parliament and are not accorded any powers or funding by it. They should not be confused with select committees, which are formal institutions of the House. There are a great number of APGs. They cover many and diverse fields such as health, education and transport. Some exist to foster links with other countries and parliaments, others to address a particular issue, and a couple exist mainly for social reasons (eg some sports groups). Some APGs have existed for many decades whereas others come and go in response to issues of the day. APGs are essentially run by and for Members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. Mostly they are run by backbenchers, though ministers may also be officers or members of APGs and many groups choose to involve individuals and organisations from outside Parliament in their administration and activities (UK Parliament, 2013).

It is also worth noting that All Part Parliamentary Groups also exist for Sustainable Housing, Housing & Care For Older People and a variety of other groups focusing on social cohesion, the built and natural environments (UK Parliament, 2013), which could be said to have complimentary agendas to the Self-Build and Independent Housing group.

<sup>110</sup> Richard Bacon MP, introducing the ‘Build-it-yourself?’ report by the Centre for Housing Policy at the University of York (A. Wallace, J. Ford, and D. Quilgars, 2013), at a parliamentary launch in London on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013. However, as of June 7<sup>th</sup> 2013, the Group does not yet appear on Parliament’s official Register of All Party Groups (UK Parliament, 2013).

<sup>111</sup> The Right to Buy scheme is a policy in the [United Kingdom](#) which gives *secure tenants* of [councils](#) and some [housing associations](#) the [legal right](#) to buy, at a large discount, the home they are living in. There is also a Right to Acquire for [assured tenants](#) of housing association homes built with public subsidy after 1997, at a smaller discount. It is estimated that approximately 2 million homes in the UK have been sold in this manner since 1980.

*“This policy would supply around 110,000 new self-build homes in its first full year. It would create a new broad base of support for housing. Each local authority should create a new waiting list for those who want a self-build plot. Households could register on it and transfer plots they obtained to immediate family members; siblings, parents, children and step-relatives. Whole families would support more homes because it could benefit a close family member. This new approach is easy to summarise: popular homes. This scheme ensures voters who become homeowners connect it with government action on their behalf.*

*This proposal represents a last chance to turn around housing before 2015. It should facilitate the building of more than 210,000 homes a year in 2014. But that is only the beginning. Over time, it could help millions of families to build the decent family home they need and want. It would do so while making building more homes into a politically winning move. This self-build policy could be as big and popular as Rights-to-Buy. It could be the next phase in this country's story of home ownership. It could be a major boost to growth while actually gaining votes.”*

(Morton, 2013, p. 5)

Whilst such proposals remain as speculation, A Right To Build is indicative of the fact that self-provision is being taken seriously by central Government as part of the future of housing supply in the UK.

It should be noted that ‘self-build’ - in the context of an evident housing crisis acknowledged across political parties - represents a particularly active and contested political field. The idea of supporting people in building their own homes has cross-party appeal, resonating equally well with both free-market and social democrat politics, and it is therefore reasonable to suggest the development of viable strategies for self-provision - such as Collective Custom Build - will remain resilient through shifts in the party-political landscape.

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# 14 NEXT STEPS: PUBLIC SECTOR

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

This study has also found that the most effective strategy in successful examples has been the identification and establishment of partnerships between organisations from different sectors, 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.

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to analyse the implications of specific recommendations, a number of recent publications by key sources have recommended specific actions that could be taken by Public Sector organisations - such as Housing Associations, other Private Registered Providers of Social Housing, and Local Authorities at all levels - to enable the greater fulfilment of Collective Custom Build (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013; NaSBA, 2013, 2012a, 2012b, 2011; Parvin et al., 2011; Self Build Portal, 2013; Wallace et al., 2013).

It is widely accepted that Local Authorities may be instrumental in delivering a change in volume, and that partnership working and/or consortia could also overcome obstacles that currently limit scale (Hill, 2013a; NaSBA, 2013, 2012b, 2011, 2008; Parvin et al., 2011, p. 152; Stevens, 2013a, 2013b; Wallace et al., 2013, p. 8). Whilst the Self Build Portal<sup>112</sup> web-platform is designed to inform the general public about how they can access self-provided housing, the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) publish specific guidance for Planners (NaSBA, 2012b)<sup>113</sup> and the Public Sector (NaSBA, 2013) on the next steps they can take. Specifically, *'How The Public Sector Can Help People Build Their Own Homes - A Practice Guide'* (NaSBA, 2013) outlines sixteen distinct conditions likely to be encountered in relation to 'self-build' - such as forms of constitution, and terms that describe the level of direct involvement by self-providers in building their own homes - and makes specific recommendations as to how 'councils and registered providers' can provide support in each case.

Generally, sources that advocate for a wider fulfilment of self-provided housing encourage public sector organisations to enable Collective Custom Build by making land, development finance or technical support available to developers and independent groups, specifically for the purpose of self-provision. NaSBA identify six key strategies that can achieve these aims:

1. **Training Up Staff** - principally by encouraging officers, councillors and general staff - as well as embryonic self-providing groups - to become familiar with existing schemes, by visiting them in order to understand how they operate and identify the qualities of the end result, as well as to become aware of governance models such as Cohousing, Community Land Trusts and Mutual Home Ownership Societies (MHOSs).
2. **Identifying Suitable Land** - by checking land-holdings and considering buying more land specifically for self-provision<sup>114</sup>, as well as making public sector land available for self-provision through land allocation via the adoption of Neighbourhood Plans and Neighbourhood Development Orders. This strategy can apply particularly to 'unconventional' pieces of land on which development is unviable using 'normal' means.

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<sup>112</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk)

<sup>113</sup> NaSBA also intends to publish guides for Developers and Lenders and to update these guides periodically in line with developments in the self-provided housing sector.

<sup>114</sup> Acquiring land by a reverse-auction process is a specific recommendation made by think-tank Policy Exchange in *'A Right To Build - Local Homes for Local People'* (Morton, 2013).

3. **Promoting & Disseminating** - by ensuring projects have strong local political support and providing leadership, as well as providing a platform for evaluation and the sharing of knowledge between projects.
4. **Developing a Self-Build / Custom Build Strategy** - perhaps by providing short-term development finance or financial guarantees to groups or developers, and by adopting a relaxed, supportive and flexible attitude to proposals, such as allowing extra time to raise money to buy land, or accepting Design Codes as part of planning applications. Public sector organisations are also encouraged to consider partnering directly with independent groups and developers / kit home manufacturers - or third sector organisations such as the Community Self Build Agency - to set up partnerships that have the capacity to make developments viable.
5. **Measuring Local Demand** -by conducting Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) and Strategic Housing Land Allocation Assessments (SHLAAs), through consultation or by using housing waiting lists to identify potential groups of people that could be enabled to provide their own homes. Local Authorities are relatively free to set their own standards against which they measure demand, and the HM Treasury also provides guidance on how to account for social value when auditing and evaluating decision making (HM Treasury, 2003, pp. 57–67).
6. **Empowering People & Communities to Do It Themselves** - by providing in-kind support and assistance with aspects of developing proposals, such as design and planning consultancy, or seconding talented 'enablers' into a community organisation to help it decide its optimum governance structure, apply for grants, work out what it wants to build and steer it through the planning and finance process.

(NaSBA, 2013, p. 19 - headings - and details throughout)

Wallace et al. also note that although a number of Local Authorities are 'testing the market' for self-provision at a relatively small scale by making land available through land allocation, there is a need for large-scale pilot schemes on a scale similar to those in evidence in the Netherlands and Germany (Ibid. 2013, p. 8), to test the 'mainstream' delivery of self-provided housing initiatives such as Collective Custom Build.

The establishment of a Local Authority-run Revolving Fund is cited by some sources as stimulus for Collective Custom Build that is likely to be both effective and relatively easy to establish (Hill, 2013a; Parvin et al., 2011; Stevens, 2013a, 2013c). Indeed, the HCA's Custom Build Homes Fund is designed as a pilot scheme and intended to demonstrate the viability of providing this kind of support to Local Authorities, encouraging them to set up their own funds (HCA, 2012). Cornwall Unitary Council is one example of a Local Authority that has a long-standing revolving fund with which it has successfully supported multi-unit self-provided housing developments in partnerships with Cornwall CLTs Ltd and Cornwall Rural Housing Association (Cornwall Rural Housing Association, 2013a, 2013b; Moore and Northcott, 2010; Stevens, 2013a).

A number of sources also state that there is a real opportunity for Collective Custom Build to provide a more meaningful route to affordable housing, particularly when considered in conjunction with governance models such as Community Land Trusts that can separate the price of a home from the value of the land that it is built on (East London Community Land Trust, 2013; Hill, 2013a, 2013b; Parvin et al., 2011).

The Community Self-Build Agency (CSBA) has a long and proven track record in partnering with Local Authorities and Registered Providers to deliver community self-build projects that have an emphasis on training - particularly for groups of people in severe housing need such as young unemployed and

homeless people, and returning service veterans - and are actively seeking opportunities to develop further projects<sup>115</sup>.

Further recommendations from key sources are summarised below.

### A 10-Point Plan To Boost Self Build

A Self-Build Industry Round Table Meeting<sup>116</sup>, held at a major trade-show in 2013 made the recommendation that Local Authority should seek to encourage and support small-scale development on sites of up to thirty homes to stimulate the 'small-builders' and build a greater volume of high-quality, sustainable homes with greater value to local economies (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 4). In a report entitled 'A 10-Point Plan To Boost Self-Build', the Round Table also made the following recommendations that it states '*should not require primary legislation, but seek to build on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and add further clarification and guidance on how it should be interpreted and implemented by local authorities. There is also scope to implement some of the changes by reviewing the outdated-but-not-revoked 'Planning System: General Principles'*' (Ibid. 2013, p. 4):

1. 1. Allow Sites for 1-30 Units to Be Classed as Minor Development
2. Local Authorities Should be Encouraged to Allow Small-Scale Greenfield Windfall Sites
3. Extend the 'Help to Buy' Scheme to Include 'Help to Build'
4. Remove Affordable Housing Contributions/Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy On Minor Development Schemes
5. Allow Only Sites with Planning Permission to be Counted as 'Deliverable' Within the Five-Year Supply Requirement
6. Ensure Neighbourhood Plans Cannot Be Taken Into Account Prematurely
7. Reduce the Cost of Putting Forward Planning Applications for Minor Development Proposals
8. Ensure the Target-Driven Culture Does Not Lead to Unnecessary Refusals
9. Ensure Determination Targets Do Not Lead to Refusals
10. Provide Further Guidance Notes on Interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to Sustainability and Rural Exception Sites.

Further detail about each of these proposals - and the arguments for them - can be found in the '10-Point Plan To Boost Self-Build' (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013).

### Build-It-Yourself?

Enabling support for Collective Custom Build from key industry stakeholders, including Local Authority and central Government, is viewed as a critical factor for increasing the number of successful schemes - either through assisting and 'smoothing a path' for otherwise independent

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<sup>115</sup> Please see [www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk/](http://www.communityselfbuildagency.org.uk/) for further information or to make contact.

<sup>116</sup> The Self-Build Industry Round Table Meeting was hosted by publisher Homebuilding & Renovating on the day prior to the 2013 National Homebuilding & Renovating Show at the NEC, Birmingham, and included "14 key self-build leaders" including "planners, finance providers, package suppliers, custom builders, and providers of building materials (some, but not all of whom, were members of the National Self Build Association, NaSBA)" and asked them to share what they saw as the main issues holding their industry back (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013, p. 2).

groups, or by initiating projects and forming groups specifically to build homes. Reflecting on their findings, Wallace et al. conclude that:

*'Most group self-build housing was led by a community group [and] often formed organically – although strong individuals were instrumental. The present complicated and lengthy procurement methods are likely to mean that these models will remain small scale and a 'niche' market unless their development is specifically supported in the future'.*

(Wallace et al., 2013, p. 7)

Wallace et al. also make a number of key recommendations that target Lenders, central Government, Local Authorities and Developers specifically (2013, pp. 7–9):

- Government should maintain their enabling role by co-ordinating reform of existing processes to facilitate scale models. They should signal their on-going support for the sector beyond 2015 (the end date for key initiatives), recognising that it takes time to achieve a step change in a previously limited sector of the housing market. Government should commission an evaluation of emerging models of procurement to facilitate better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and longer-term viability. There are also opportunities for the Government to initiate more opportunities for sharing evidence of good practice, particularly in relation to local government.
- Local authorities should consider the extent to which they can use planning agreements to embed self-build sites within speculative developments and, where appropriate, consider the benefits of supporting the sector to provide 'more affordable' housing for local people. The opportunities to expand this model from its more traditional rural location to urban areas should be explored. They should seek to address those aspects of the planning process that particularly constrain self builders. There may also be opportunities for local authorities to make land available and to designate a proportion as self-build plots.
- Developers and registered providers should recognise the social and economic benefits of working with prospective residents/purchasers to enable them to procure and/or customise their homes. There are also opportunities to work collaboratively as enablers to provide packaged solutions of professional services to help self-builders overcome the 'silo' approach that currently characterises and slows the self-build process.
- Lenders should provide additional guidance to potential self-builders about the criteria for funding. They should appraise the risks that pertain to the different procurement models and consider whether products can be tailored to reflect the different risk profiles. They should work across the industry to smooth lending processes to the sector and consider working in consort with other lenders, developers, housing associations or local authorities to effect the delivery of large-scale self-build sites. They should also consider the development of more accessible products for individual customers.

(Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 8–9)

## A Right To Build

Parvin et al. (2011) 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)<sup>117</sup>. The study also includes an 'index of key actions' required to create the conditions for each scenario (Ibid. 2011, p. 152).

Specific recommendations for central Government and the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) are:

- A National Self-Provided Housing Agency<sup>118</sup> - Continue to pull together experts, lenders, private sector companies and self-provision organisations at a national level through a central agency, in order to serve as a resource for local authorities, private sector companies and communities, as suggested by Hill et al. Of course the aims and agendas of these actors will not always cohere into a single clear message, however, their collective aim should be to make different models of mass self-provision as normal, accessible, easy and risk-free as possible, for everyone involved.
- Research - Gather together ongoing research and evidence of the externalities and public value outcomes which emerge from pioneer projects. This should also include a watchfulness for external negative consequences, such as social exclusion.
- Develop Standard Models - Create, communicate and support standard legal, financial and planning models, which are backed by partnerships.
- Set Up Revolving Funds - Establish catalyst funds for communities, groups or organisations trying to develop self-provided housing schemes with limited capital resources, but good prospects of long-term revenue.
- Public Land Assets - Pioneer the sale and use of public land assets for self-provision models. These should include Self-Build Zones, assembled around Local Development Orders and development partnerships.

(Ibid. 2011, p. 152)

Parvin et al. also have specific recommendations for Local Authorities and Planners:

- *Land and market assessments* - Include demand for self-provided housing types in Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) and Strategic Housing Land Area Assessments (SHLAAs), so that land can be allocated proportionately to its market share, as advocated by the Office for Fair Trading.
- *Public land disposal* - In the interests of achieving the best public value outcomes, local authorities should consider making sites or plots for self-provided housing a standard component of all public land disposals. This might include slow 'geared' land purchase, rather than single one-off payment. Even where there may be a disparity between the financial yield offered by self-provision and conventional market purchase, an evidenced case should be sought and put forward that the disparity be considered a form of investment in place-making outcomes (this might be guaranteed, for example, by the formation of a CLT).
- *Section 106 and CIL* - Where small self-provided housing schemes need support, local authorities should consider exemption from external Affordable Housing contribution or CIL. Alternatively, they can make this easier for self-providers to finance by deferring CIL payments until after completion.
- *Use of public land* - Seek to design legal arrangements and contracts allowing licensing of public land, which may include rents geared up over time with the resident's ability to pay.

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<sup>117</sup> The scenarios explored by Parvin et al. include Suburban Co-housing, Urban Community Land Trusts and Self-Build Zones (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143).

<sup>118</sup> It should be noted that this already exists to a large degree in the form of the National Self Build Association (NaSBA), although Parvin et al. suggest that its capacity should be wider than advocacy and representation. Please see [www.nasba.org.uk](http://www.nasba.org.uk) for further information.

- *Land through planning conditions* - Seek legal and professional advice on the capacity to make land (and / or infrastructure) for self-provision models (including self-finish) part of a Section 106 planning requirement on large sites for private development.

(Ibid. 2011, pp. 152–153)

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# 15 NEXT STEPS: PRIVATE SECTOR

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO ENABLE COLLECTIVE CUSTOM BUILD

A number of key publications have recommended actions that could be taken by Private Sector organisations such as developers, house-builders and small-builders to enable the greater fulfilment of Collective Custom Build (Homebuilding & Renovating, 2013; NaSBA, 2013, 2012a, 2012b, 2011; Parvin et al., 2011; Self Build Portal, 2013; 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 organisations from different sectors, 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.

Whilst the Self Build Portal<sup>119</sup> web-platform is designed to inform the general public about how they can access self-provided housing, the National Self Build Association (NaSBA) publish specific guidance for Planners (NaSBA, 2012b)<sup>120</sup> and the Public Sector (NaSBA, 2013) on the next steps they can take and plan further guidance for Lenders and the Private Sector.

Although aimed primarily at the Public Sector, *'How The Public Sector Can Help People Build Their Own Homes - A Practice Guide'* (NaSBA, 2013) outlines sixteen distinct conditions likely to be encountered in relation to 'self-build' - such as forms of constitution, and terms that describe the level of direct involvement by self-providers in building their own homes - and makes recommendations that could also be applied by private sector organisations

A number of private companies are diversifying as Custom Build Developers and Development Managers in order to respond to the opportunities presented by Collective Custom Build, and are actively seeking development partners to explore how self-provision could mix with traditional house-building development (Fairgrove Homes Ltd, 2013; HAB, 2013; Igloo, 2013; Solidspace, 2013; Urban Self Build, 2013 and others).

A number of key sources make specific recommendations for the private sector, which are discussed below.

### Build-It-Yourself?

Wallace et al. have undertaken a thorough examination of the lending market for self-build and make specific recommendations for developers and private sector lenders<sup>121</sup>, highlighting the significant opportunities that exist in the sector (2013, pp. 7–9) as well as the need for specific support for 'group self-build housing' if it is to gain wider market traction:

- Developers and registered providers should recognise the social and economic benefits of working with prospective residents/purchasers to enable them to procure and/or customise their homes. There are also opportunities to work collaboratively as

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<sup>119</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk)

<sup>120</sup> NaSBA also intends to publish guides for Developers and Lenders and to update these guides periodically in line with developments in the self-provided housing sector.

<sup>121</sup> Wallace et al. also make specific recommendations for central Government and Local Authorities (see Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 7–9).

enablers to provide packaged solutions of professional services to help self-builders overcome the 'silo' approach that currently characterises and slows the self-build process.

- Lenders should provide additional guidance to potential self-builders about the criteria for funding. They should appraise the risks that pertain to the different procurement models and consider whether products can be tailored to reflect the different risk profiles. They should work across the industry to smooth lending processes to the sector and consider working in consort with other lenders, developers, housing associations or local authorities to effect the delivery of large-scale self-build sites. They should also consider the development of more accessible products for individual customers.

(Wallace et al., 2013, pp. 8–9)

## A Right To Build

Parvin et al. (2011) 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)<sup>122</sup>. The study also includes an 'index of key actions' required to create the conditions for each scenario (Ibid. 2011, p. 152).

Parvin et al. also recommend a series of key actions that could be taken by private sector developers, land-owners, contractors, consultants and manufacturers:

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- *Self-provided plots as 'seed' development* - Develop business models which use plot-promotion on part or all of sites as a means to catalyse placemaking and de-risk the initial phases of development, or to shift from short to long-term revenues
- *Take out market risk* - Seek to partner with local authorities and self-providing groups to deliver houses, effectively as a form of pre-sales. This will require new ways of working for users who are leading projects, and new ways of eliminating risk.
- *Innovation* - Innovate to capitalise on the latent-desire to self-provide by designing processes and products which makes self-provision easier, less risky and more sustainable. Design-in capacity for the investment of user 'sweat equity' where appropriate. This may include sharing risk for fees at the initial stages of a project.
- *Communication* - The shift towards a mass-micro operating model means communicating with non-professionals as much as professionals, without 'dumbing down' the full complexity of options or reverting to a 'consultation' mindset. Clear user-facing interfaces of all kinds, throughout the process are required to allow self-providers to make informed decisions.

(Parvin et al., 2011, p. 153)

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<sup>122</sup> The scenarios explored by Parvin et al. include Suburban Co-housing, Urban Community Land Trusts and Self-Build Zones (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143).



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# 16 NEXT STEPS: GROUPS

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

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 homes<sup>123</sup> (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).

The Self Build Portal provides some 'next steps' for groups and individuals wishing to find, initiate or join an 'independent community collaboration'<sup>124</sup>, 'supported community self-build group'<sup>125</sup> or 'developer-led group project'<sup>126</sup> (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.uk<sup>127</sup> 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

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<sup>123</sup> Please refer to 'Statute & Policy' in the study.

<sup>124</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/independent-community-collaboration](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/independent-community-collaboration)

<sup>125</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/supported-community-self-build-group](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/supported-community-self-build-group)

<sup>126</sup> Please visit [www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/developer-led-group-project](http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/developer-led-group-project)

<sup>127</sup> Please visit [www.communitybuild.org.uk](http://www.communitybuild.org.uk)

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 Housing<sup>128</sup> - offer the opportunity to become an investor in the company itself (HAB, 2013).

Existing umbrella organisations, such as the National CLT Network<sup>129</sup> and UK Cohousing Network<sup>130</sup> 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 bank<sup>131</sup>, or the Ecology Building Society<sup>132</sup> 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)<sup>133</sup>. 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.
- *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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<sup>128</sup> Please visit [www.habhousing.co.uk](http://www.habhousing.co.uk)

<sup>129</sup> Please visit [www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk](http://www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk)

<sup>130</sup> Please visit [www.cohousing.org.uk](http://www.cohousing.org.uk)

<sup>131</sup> See [www.triodos.co.uk/en/personal/](http://www.triodos.co.uk/en/personal/)

<sup>132</sup> See [www.ecology.co.uk/](http://www.ecology.co.uk/)

<sup>133</sup> The scenarios explored by Parvin et al. include Suburban Co-housing, Urban Community Land Trusts and Self-Build Zones (Ibid. 2011, pp. 125–143).

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# CONCLUSIONS

The information presented in this report demonstrates the barriers and opportunities that exist in relation to Collective Custom Build. It maps a clear way forward for the various actors involved in the process to help facilitate much needed housing– homes that are built by the people who live in them – and offers an alternative to the currently dysfunctional housing market in the UK.

Housing development in the UK is highly contingent on the politics of the day, the availability of land and finance, emerging technologies and social norms. It is a complex undertaking that involves a significant amount of teamwork in order to negotiate the various social, environmental, economic and cultural factors that condition any outcomes. Collective Custom Build as a formal group endeavour is a relatively new approach to housing development although people have been building their own homes individually for centuries. As such, many nascent collective housing groups wrestle with the same problems which are not yet formally resolved through national, regional and local policy and processes that are accessible to all.

A key finding from the Motivating Collective Custom Build project is the role of partnerships and leadership and the importance of actors who *enable* collective custom build. This refers to both key actors that played an enabling role in successful projects as well as to the emerging professional figure of collective custom build enabler. Without these enablers, it is unlikely that Custom Build housing will develop enough capacity to emerge from the margins and into mainstream housing production.

The MCCB project aimed to encourage the uptake of Collective Custom Build through a dual approach of combining a call to mobilise (advocacy film) with the background information, examples and precedents needed to mobilise (research “peelbacks”). It has set out a detailed understanding of current policies, practices and research activities around Collective Custom Build in UK, as well as a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics between key actors. This has been presented in a highly accessible and dynamic format (film and website) as well as in a more traditional report. We are excited by the potential of this new way of communicating research.

The film and the research “peelbacks’ (presented in this report as chapters) were presented to key audiences including Registered Providers, Developers, Local Authorities, Designers and Third Sector in order to test them for initial effect and impact. The feedback received in each case was positive and encouraging – typically, a Council Leader from the South West of England praised the film as useful tool to explain to other actors within his council what custom build is and why they should look at Collective Custom Build seriously.

We very much hope that this report offers understanding and guidance for all who wish to undertake a new way of providing housing that offers equitable, efficient, affordable, meaningful and highly desirable accommodation.

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