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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.

# UK HOUSING CRISIS

## WHY WE HAVE A HOUSING CRISIS

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### Summary

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>1</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

<sup>1</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) .

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).

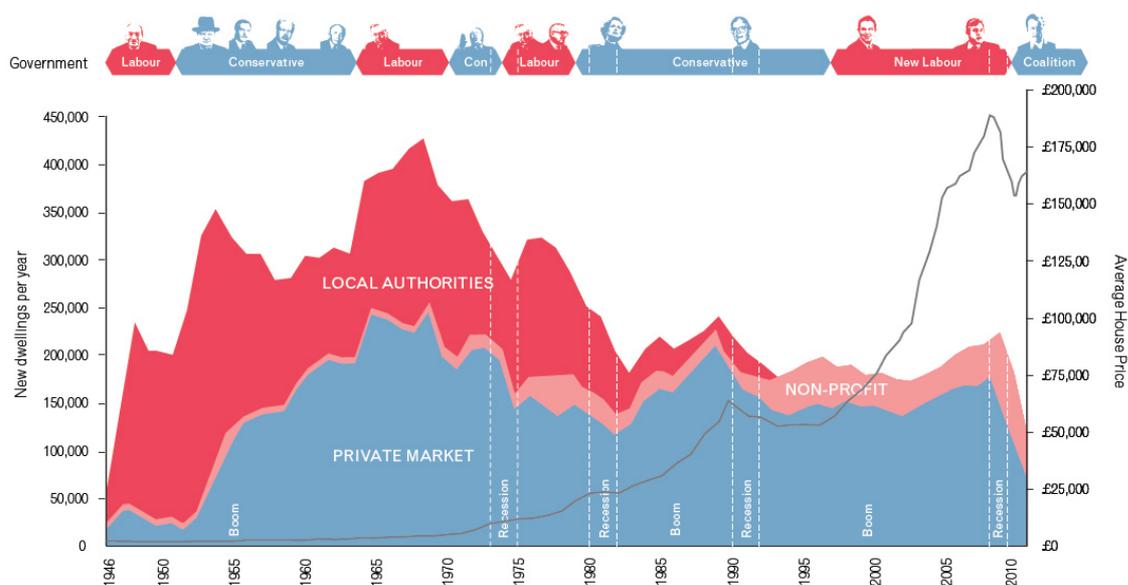
There is indeed a broader consensus beyond Parvin et al. that we need a radical change in the way we procure housing, in order to provide greater consumer choice and stimulate a competitive environment for private house-building, as well as developing alternative routes to affordable and social housing (Barlow et al., 2001; Barker, 2004; Parvin et al., 2011; DCLG, 2011; Miles and Whitehouse, 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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This excerpt is taken from [www.collectivecustombuild.org](http://www.collectivecustombuild.org) and forms a single element of a wider research study. Please visit the website or contact us at [collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:collectivecustombuild@sheffield.ac.uk) for more information.



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