Making Home: A Study of Recent Self-Build Projects in the UK

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Abstract

Based on John Turner's (1972) assertion that a dweller's control of the decisions concerning the design, construction and management of their housing stimulates individual and social well being, the thesis examines the experience of a cluster group of self-builders in the UK in order to test Turner's proposition within current social and cultural conditions.

The study of self-building is located within the discipline of design history as it seeks to provide a contextual account of the process of designing and making a home giving due consideration to the political, economic and social history of housing and to studies of housing design that propose particular theories and methods for the interpretation of domestic architecture and interior space.

This is the first study of its kind to examine the self-build home as a conveyor of social and cultural information and to place the activities of the amateur designer and builder within the context of design history. Further to this, the study proposes that the self-build home – its production and consumption – offers unique insight into the postmodern condition. The study explores how self-builders bring their understanding of their personal needs and aspirations to the design and construction process, and the knowledge and skills they develop to accomplish the complex and lengthy task of self-building. Using a collection of cases the study explores how the amateur designer and builder re-negotiates traditional precepts concerning home design and building through their intervention in the provision of specialist professions and trades.

The study concludes that self-building, like other forms of 'serious' amateur activity, offers a highly challenging process and significant rewards (that contribute to well being on a number of levels). These include rewards concerned with personal development (reflecting issues of identity and creativity), knowledge and skill development (for example project management and quantity surveying), social and lifestyle gains (in terms of what the home offers and how it functions) as well as gains in equity through the contribution of the self-builder's own labour. A further finding shows the need for further and specialist facilitation processes to be developed to support a deeper engagement with the conceptual and design phases of self-build projects.
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Introduction

'When dwellers control the major decisions and are free to make their own contribution to the design, construction or management of their housing, both the process and the environment produced stimulate individual and social well being’ John Turner (in Turner and Fichter 1972:241).

Hypothesis

The practice of building a home using the skills and resources of the intended owner and occupier is far from unusual in many places around the world, particularly where vernacular traditions survive. There are many studies that examine these processes in some detail, for example, Ward (1982) and Mathey (1992). The idea of 'self-building' in Britain as a popular form of housing provision has declined parallel to the development of industrial and commercial building practices since the 18th century. However, despite this general shift towards a reliance on professional building activity, the existence of self-building albeit marginalised, has continued in Britain, and stands today at around 8 percent of the annual new build provision, amounting to approximately 16,000 homes (Armor and Snell 2002:10). Prior to the statistics given by Armor and Snell, information on precisely the quantity of self-build activity taking place since commercial systems of organisation became dominant are rare and problematic. In the studies of self-building that do exist, such as Ward and Hardy's (1984) Archadia For All: Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape, it is a particular social history of self-building that unfolds, about housing created on the very margins of contemporary planning legislation. Although Ward's oral history provides a powerful insight into the motivation of self-builders, it does not draw upon statistical records of this form of building at a national scale. Another problem exists in defining what constitutes self-build activity, since these range considerably from participants that entirely design, arrange planning and construct, to those who contract out a whole range of tasks to various professions and trades or employ the services of a self-build company to act as project manager and general contractor.
There is also some contention in defining the legitimate self-builder in terms of their occupational background in the building professions or trades. In MacFarlane's study of self-building in Scotland (1986:6) he defines the self-builder as 'any person, not known as a registered builder, who purchases land and by using his own expertise self-constructs, part constructs or self-manages the construction of his own house or participates in a self-build housing group to achieve the same aims.' Of the 33 case studies compiled by MacFarlane, the expertise of self-builders ranged considerably: 12 participants came from building associated professions, a further 10 from the building trades and only 11 from occupations unassociated with the building industry. While MacFarlane's study provides a useful definition of self-building and a comprehensive overview of the methods, costs and legal framework of a variety of self-build projects, it does not provide an assessment of the value of self-building in terms of its contribution to well being or an explanation of the social or cultural context of self-building.

The hypothesis for this study emerges from the statement made by John Turner in 1972 when he asserted that a 'dweller's' control of major decisions concerning the design, construction and management of their housing, stimulates 'individual and social well being.' Turner's interest in user participation in both the UK and the developing world was at a time when there was little recognition of the value of participation in architectural design and housing re-development. Despite the fact that subsequently there has been significant attention to the issues of participation, particularly in the context of public housing and re-development schemes, there has been no consideration of Turner's assertion within the 'private' self-build sector. The hypothesis for this study is to examine Turner's assertion in relation to private self-build projects and to evaluate whether such projects have the capacity to stimulate well being in the context of contemporary economic, social and cultural conditions.

In establishing the 'conditions' of self-building it is necessary to define these practices within a discipline and provide a theoretical framework for their examination. The study locates self-building within the context of design history and
within this, alongside studies that consider the 'everyday' object over those of iconic status. However, there is a particular and important omission within the discipline which this study addresses, namely that of the 'serious' amateur designer and their object. This study describes the special capabilities and qualities of the amateur designer and their object and attempts to show that these objects – their process of production and consumption – offer unique insights into the postmodern condition.

Turner's research into the advantages of self-building were carried out largely, although not exclusively, in the United States and South America (Peru and Colombia). His analysis is based on the assertion that the value of housing lies in its ability to serve the material and psychological needs of dwellers rather than 'in the building as such' (Turner 1972: vii). Further to this Turner contends that the ability to create in this way, meaningful housing solutions, depends on the participation of dwellers in the building process. Clearly Turner as well as the other contributors to Freedom to Build, are concerned with issues of housing supply and demand among socially disadvantaged groups. However, self-building is to them not only a debate about the economics of housing supply, but a qualitative issue about the 'appropriateness' of housing to the needs of dwellers. In the chapter, The Meaning of Autonomy (Turner 1972: 242), the benefits to well being, of direct action in housing provision, are described in terms of the 'pride in achievement, the sense of competence and satisfaction stemming from direct personal action.' They further suggest that 'direct action in fulfilling housing needs can contribute as much to psychological well being as it can to the physical improvement of adequate housing conditions.' The benefits of self-building are not only perceived in relation to those communities that have fewer choices in their housing provision. The authors contend that 'in the context of poverty, autonomy increases quantity: in any context, it increases meaning.' The ability to take control over decisions concerning housing is thought to bring about a better integration of the needs (material and non-material) of individuals with the dwelling environment. The achievement of integration, which in this context stands for 'meaning,' applies to all, irrespective of social or class
status. The authors base their belief of the values (in terms of well being) of self-building on cases they have studied in the developed and developing world. Their analyses are based on the interpretation of that case study material rather than on any quantifiable measures of well being.

In order to test Turner's assertion in the context of contemporary self-building however, it is necessary to build an understanding of the particular activity of private self-building and to assemble the literature and the 'history' of the activity, marking out what characteristics it shares with other types of building activity (for example, public housing, contingency housing and social housing). Chapter one provides a thematic review of literature by considering a range of approaches to this area of study. It examines the literature associated with self-building from a political perspective and that which develops a social and cultural explanation for self-building in the UK. Chapter one also considers literature that offers a theoretical approach to the study of self-building in the context of design history, material culture and aspects of psychology that links well being with self-building (and other forms of 'serious amateur' activity). In considering the theoretical context of study, chapter one also explores the research methods that have relevance for this field of study.

Chapter two provides a mapping of a number of sub-themes and in particular begins to shape the ideological framework of self-building. It considers for example, historical attitudes to domestic architecture and the commercial and professional developments of the 19th and 20th centuries that have shaped contemporary attitudes to home-building and home-making. Chapter three is also concerned with ideology, but this time from the perspective of the self-build company and seeks to understand the values associated with self-building (for example the perceived goals and achievements that are believed to lead to well being) from a commercial perspective. As has been stated, it is also the intention of the thesis to place self-building within the discipline field of design history by developing an understanding of self-build homes as conveyors of cultural and social relations. By examining the environment of commercial self-building it is intended to show the social and cultural
codes and assumptions made about contemporary housing needs by interpreting the messages contained in promotional literature of the majority of self-build companies operating in the UK. The findings from this study will be compared and contrasted with the ideological assumptions about homes and participation in housing arising from chapters one and two, and the case-study material of actual self-build projects in chapter four.

Chapter four explores the experiences of a cluster of self-builders in Hampshire and analyses the self-build process, the type of homes created by participants and how the design of their home maps on to their particular needs and aspirations. This section also explores a number of sub-themes: namely the motivation of self-builders; what participants contribute to the design process and the ways in which their homes are expressive of their needs and identity. The section also considers the skills and knowledge participants develop and to what extent they draw upon media influences and materials, professional services and other support agencies.

Chapter five returns to the central hypothesis and discusses the material explored in previous chapters to assess whether 'private' self-building has the capacity to stimulate well being in the way proposed by Turner.

It is further the intention of this study to understand the nature of self-building as a cultural phenomenon exploring its particularly postmodern qualities, within the context of design history. Without this, it would not be possible to examine self-building with reference to any particular theoretical or ideological framework or to 'assess' it against relevant debates concerning the meaning of home and the social, economic and political constraints on housing design that influence the self-build sector. For example, the thesis will show that the study of self-building contributes positively to the subject of design history by considering the special contribution of the 'amateur' designed object. That it is capable of redefining the relationship between producer and consumer; that it can provide the opportunity for the critical intervention of 'amateurs' within professional (design) processes and can contribute to cultural specificity in design.
Contribution to knowledge

Commentators have suggested that the postmodern condition defines new cultural, social and economic relations (Baudrillard (1996), Foucault (1985) and Jameson (1994)) elements of which can be discerned in contemporary self-building. The political environment has increasingly rejected the idea of paternalism, supporting the view that consumer demand and private industry are best placed to secure the needs of people with only limited state intervention. It might be argued that such a condition is liberating in that consumers may describe the particular nature of their needs, generating demands to which they and industry responds. Such an environment may therefore, offer the potential for greater diversity of cultural expression, particularly given the advantages offered by computer aided technology to ‘tailor’ products for niche markets.

The proposition for this study stems from the above assumptions and seeks to understand them by examining what self-build participants do to their environments in order to create spaces they feel comfortable in and that reflect something of their personal identity, needs and aspirations. There are many studies that explore the subject of identity in domestic environments (Brand 1997, Rapoport 1990, Putnam and Newton 1990, Miller 1988 for example). Indeed the opportunity to alter the structure of a building, to particularise it or improve the quality or quantity of physical space, has seen rapid development since the beginnings of the do-it-yourself industry in the 1950s (Rapoport 1969, Brand 1997, Ward 1976). We have seen this shift from ‘household improvements’ encouraged through the pages of Practical Householder, to a fully-fledged self-build industry captured in Self-Build and Design, Homebuilding and Renovating and Build-It magazines, as well as Channel 4’s Grand Designs series. The self-build industry today offers participants the opportunity to think from scratch how they wish their environment to look and function, and what it might express about their personal identity, needs and aspirations. More importantly, access to self-building in terms of the range of packages and systems
available, price differentiation and more easily available mortgages for self-builders, has brought the possibilities of self-building to an increasingly wide market (AMA 2003:10).

Given the sophistication and flexibility of the self-build industry as we find it today, it should be possible to examine the propositions described here and the potential of self-building to enhance well being as well as bring about greater heterogeneity of built form by responding to issues of identity and local specificity. It will also examine the extent to which consumers can perform the roles usually ascribed to professionals (design in particular) and whether the self-build industry is structured in such a way as to fully exploit the potential of amateur home designers and builders.

From the discussion of literature in the following chapters it is clear is that very little is known about the self-build home as an object of study, the factors that motivate people to build their own home beyond rather simplistic analyses of the perceived social (in a general community sense) and economic advantages, and the nature of the challenges and goals of self-building that bring with it the capacity to enhance well being. The small amount of literature that does exist does not consider the self-build home as a conveyor of social and cultural information or the creation of the self-build home in terms of a personal development process (leading to well being). This study will bring to the discipline of design history, an understanding of the unique qualities of the self-build home as an object of material culture and will show how it can contribute to debates within the subject that have been outlined earlier. The study will also develop new insight into the way a study of amateur design might be approached by drawing on material in psychology that relates well being to certain types of activities that bring about reward on a number of levels (such as knowledge development, opportunities for reflection and creativity and economic benefit).
Research Design

The research design for the study of self-building draws on qualitative research methods. The rationale for applying particular qualitative techniques is discussed in chapter one where the literature relates certain methods to theoretical paradigms in the subject. The section below describes the research activities that have taken place and their relationship to one another to form a coherent research strategy.

Case Studies

The purpose of the case-studies is to understand in some depth the experiences of self-builders who have performed projects within the 'mainstream' of self-build activity. The reason this is a desirable feature of the research design rests with the nature of the discipline of design history and material culture and the objective of this study to review the practice of self-building in ordinary circumstances, taking cases that are 'typical,' rather than those that represent more 'elite' or 'special' projects. Attfield, in the introduction to Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life (2000) describes the significance of the 'ordinary' and 'undisciplined' object for what it can explain about everyday life and experience. Similarly Marcus in the House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Homes (1995:6) refers to her interest in the 'average, middle-of-the-road house or apartment' for what is says about the lives of ordinary dwellers, and not for what is says about architecture.

There are of course many 'special' self-build homes. These are the homes that are featured on television series and in the magazines mentioned earlier, that have been selected for the innovative quality of the design, or other special circumstances (characteristics of the site or scale of investment for example). This study seeks to

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1 The importance of the 'everyday' within studies of material culture is explained by Attfield (1999) in 'Beyond the Pale,' Journal of Design History Vol 12 No 4:373-380 and emerging from the work of Henri Lefebvre in Critique of Everyday Life, first published in French in 1947. The first issue of the Journal of Material Culture (1996) in defining the field, likewise eschews any notion of the 'exclusiveness' of objects in that all objects offer content to the study of culture.
represent a mainstream approach to self-building and as such draws on projects that have not used architects in a formal capacity (which typifies 94 percent of the self-build population (Maclnnes (1994)), are located in rural/semi-rural settings (urban examples being more unusual owing to the difficulty of acquiring plots large enough for detached dwellings) and are typical in size and scale defined by the number of bedrooms (AMA 2003: 17)). Attention has also been given to MacFarlane's (1986:6) definition of a self-builder to ensure participants fall into the category of the 'amateur' builder.

Rather than use a singular 'intrinsic' or 'instrumental' case, literature on the subject of case-studies (Stake in Denzin and Lincoln 2000) confirmed the need to establish a collection of cases so that these could be examined for what they demonstrate about their commonality as well as their unique characteristics. However the quantity of qualitative data gained from collective case-studies presents difficulties for detailed interpretation and as such it was intended that fewer than ten cases would be used for the study, but that they should seek to represent the mainstream of self-build practice.

Using reference data gained from The UK Self-Build Housing Market (AMA 2003) the first statistical report into self-building, a hypothetical profile of the 'typical' self-builder was generated (appendix E) for comparison against the profiles of the six self-builders used within the study. This made it possible to interpret the findings of the cases against the profile of typical self-builders nationally and to discuss those elements of the profiles that were untypical and as such had consequences for the interpretation of data and findings.

Letters were placed in the Farnham Herald group of newspapers inviting self-builders in the area to participate in the study. The Herald group includes five separate weekly broadsheets: the Farnham Herald, Alton Herald, Borden Herald, Petersfield Herald and Haslemere Herald comprising an overall circulation of 31,000 and a readership of approximately 90,000.
The geographic region ranges from Farnham, Farnborough and Camberly to the north and to the east, Guildford and Godalming. To the south-east of the region lies Haslemere and Midhurst. The areas to the south extend beyond Petersfield and to the west includes Alton and New Alresford. A map showing the region is included on table 5. Chapter four gives further details about the socio-economic characteristics of the region, specifically in relation to the housing market and provides an explanation of the profile of the six participants who came forward to take part in the study.

The purpose of case study research is to understand the experiences of self-builders through witness testimony and through observation of the physical environment (the design of the house, spatial arrangements, materials, colours and finishes). Witness testimony was therefore a multi-media experience, comprising an interview of around two hours duration, supplemented with photographic journals, plans and blueprints, self-build literature, ledgers and other ephemeral sources. In most cases a detailed tour was given of the physical environment, in other cases photographs were made available or were taken during the interview to support recall. Interviews were semi-structured and participants were provided with a breakdown of the structure of the interview prior to the meeting. The interview structure (appendix D) follows the narrative sequence of the self-build process, starting with an explanation of the participant's requirements and expectations, followed by the research and design phases and concluding with a set of issues about the project's outcomes. The narrative sequencing of questions supported participants in 'telling their story' which often contained a large amount of biographical information. The transcripts of interviews are given in appendix F and photographic records are contained in illustrations 11-25.

During the interview a 'word exercise' was conducted, designed to 'prompt' the participant to makes links with a number of themes that had emerged from the analysis of self-build company literature. Word cards were created using the
'concepts' that were counted in the analysis of company brochures in order to 'test' some of the cultural assumptions made in promotional literature. A further reason for the incorporation of the word exercise was to focus participants on describing conceptual themes in the design of their home. Pilot case-studies conducted in 1997 showed this to be a particularly challenging part of the interview process. Although participants could articulate precisely the process of self-building, life-events and other biographical information, they were less able to articulate the 'ideas' of the project. While the use of word cards was problematic (as the concepts themselves have complex associations and were used in an 'open' question format) they did help to prompt a discussion about personal 'design values' that could be compared with the design values represented in company brochures. A photographic record was kept of the word exercise (appendix C, figures 13-18) which have been summarised as a table in figure 19.

Analysis of Self-Build Company Brochures and Advertisements

In order to gain an understanding of the perceived values of the self-build process from a broader social and cultural perspective, a detailed analysis was needed of the commercial self-build sector. It was intended that this study should build an understanding of what the commercial sector reflects in terms of popular assumptions and messages about self-build homes and the process of self-building. Given that there was no published literature on the subject, further primary research was designed to fulfil this aspect of the study.

One element of this research concerned the collection of data from self-build company brochures. Observation of this material provided an explanation of the range of products, services and 'advice' that the self-build company provides to self-builders. The material was also used to gain an understanding of the 'values' companies perceive the mainstream audience for self-building to hold, in terms of economic gain, social (lifestyle) and cultural (including aesthetic) values. Indeed, the values of this audience might also be a reflection of those held of the larger new
build sector, as the discussion in chapter five reveals. Recognising the ‘size’ of the data (brochures were received from 23 of approximately 30 companies operating in the UK) and its complexity (ranging from a simple folded A4 document to the more sophisticated full-colour 50 page brochure) a methodology for collecting the data was necessary. This comprised a straightforward ‘count’ of the services companies provided, dividing these into ‘basic’ and ‘customer care’ categories. This data is summarised in tables 1 and 2. In addition to this exercise, a further word count was conducted of ‘expressive’ concepts in the brochure copy so that an analysis could be made of the ‘ideas’ and ‘values’ that companies attribute to self-building (table 3). Other data, such as quotations from self-builders and illustrations/photographs of company products, also contributed to the analysis and discussion of the ideological themes arising from these documents. Indeed the use of ‘trade literature’ as a source of primary data in studies of housing design has been used by Hanson (1998) to analyse property development in Milton Keynes, where a combination of word counting and observation was used to draw out ideological themes to powerful effect. The analysis of company brochures proved to be a rich source of data for building an appreciation of the role of the self-build ‘package’ company within the self-build market. Indeed the brochure could be seen to perform an important intermediary role between producer and consumer providing a combination of ‘information’ and ‘advice’ as well as a vehicle for ‘persuading’ an audience and ‘promoting’ the company within a competitive market.

Further to the study of company brochures, ten self-build company advertisements were taken from specialist magazines for more detailed semiotic and interpretative analysis of the themes arising from the analysis of brochures. Although it would have been possible to carry out such an analysis of the brochures, they were often too large and certainly too varied for this to have been practical. The advertisements follow a less varied structure however, and provide a highly distilled source of qualitative data. Chapter three discusses the approach to the analysis of company advertisements (using methods developed in semiology) and provides a discussion of the way the meaning of self-building is structured and coded from the particular
point of view of the 'producer' of self-build products and services. The data emerging from the analysis of advertisements is contained in appendix B, with an overview of the key concepts to emerge from the exercise in figure 12. Copies of the advertisements used in the analysis are shown in illustrations 1-10.

The analysis of self-build company literature proved a highly efficient way of capturing and distilling the views the industry believe the mainstream audience for self-building to hold about notions of home and the perceived benefits of the self-building process. This data supports the development of a meta-level appreciation of the ideology of self-building and how it might be interpreted and understood as a postmodern phenomenon. This is in contrast to the case-study material that draws upon the experiential and subjective accounts made of particular projects. Accounting for two, quite distinct perspectives on self-building provides a more complex analysis of the themes set out in the hypothesis and an opportunity to 'triangulate' the findings of the primary research with those contained within secondary sources.

**Published Sources**

A large quantity of published material has been used within the study to support the investigation into self-building. There are very few published sources that discuss 'private' self-building, and the ones that do exist relate to practical guidance material, or to the process and technicalities of self-building such as MacFarlane’s (1986) thesis, or to market-based information such as the AMA (2003) report referred to earlier. Despite the lack of material dealing with self-build as a social and cultural phenomenon, there was a great deal of material in associated areas of study that could be used to provide the historical and theoretical framework for the thesis. Literature was gathered that related to associated self-building activity, such as that dealing with contingency, community and self-help housing. This material generated an understanding of the particular characteristics of 'private' self-building over other forms of self-building activity. Further literature was used that related to the social
and economic history of housing and house building. This material provided a crucial context for developing an understanding about the way the housing industry has changed, becoming both more standardised and yet stylistically more adaptable to the market as systems of manufacture and distribution have changed over time. Other themes such as planning legislation and policy have also been assessed in relation to contemporary self-building through published sources. This has included articles in government reports as well as those produced by lead bodies such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE).

In addition to tracing historical themes through literature, it was necessary to draw upon published sources that dealt with the philosophical issues to do with the ideal home, as well as that which describes shifts in thinking about the 'correct' form and process of designing domestic buildings. This material was highly varied, some drawn from philosophy such as Bachalard's The Poetics of Space (1969), other material from design history such as Greenhalgh's Modernism in Design (1990) and Attfield's Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life (2000). Material was also considered that formed philosophical views about the nature of effective housing design such as Rapoport's The Meaning of the Built Environment (1990) and Brand's How Buildings Learn (1997).

Beyond using literature to locate the study of the self-build home alongside other studies in the field of design history and housing design that used similar interpretative tools and methodologies, it was also necessary to understand the place of self-building within the larger ideological shifts of our time in terms of what it says about the way objects are produced and consumed, applied and adapted to our needs and aspirations. This involved drawing on literature used within cultural studies such as Baudrillard's The System of Objects (1996) and Jameson's The Constraints of Postmodernism (1994) against which it has been possible to observe the particular function of self-building within modern systems of production and consumption.
The study of self-building has also drawn upon literature to support the methods of analysis and interpretation that have been used for primary research tasks. This includes methods of semiotic and visual observation such as Hanson’s Decoding Homes and Houses (1998) and O’Toole’s The Language of Displayed Art (1994), as well as methods of participant observation (Jorgensen 1989) and uses of case-studies and other qualitative methods such as those described by Denzin and Lincoln in the Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000).

Published sources have been used to locate self-building historically and theoretically and within the context of current housing themes such as those of planning policy and public participation in housing development processes. Both the review of literature in chapter one and the mapping of relevant historical issues in chapter two, formed the key thematic debates that are traced throughout the thesis, such as those concerned with identity, individuality, popular aesthetic codes in housing design and well being.

Other Material

During the investigation into the contemporary context of self-building in chapter two, specifically in relation to current planning policy, the development of village design statements by local planning authorities emerged as important new data towards an understanding of local planning policy and the aesthetic principles applied to planning applications. Indeed these statements, like company brochures, offer an intriguing array of information which it is not easy to categorise as either primary or secondary sources of data. At one level the information clearly functions at the level of policy and can be interpreted along the same lines as other documents of this nature that are presumed to have authority. However, as locally derived pieces of policy (albeit following broad government guidelines) they are an assembly of local history, ‘design advice’ and ‘instruction’ formed through consultation with the local community, and as such offer a rich source of primary data. Again, it has been suggested that such material provides legitimate data in studies of design history.
(and design) functioning 'at an appropriate point within or between the categories of production or consumption' and which debate 'the extent to which prescriptive material may be taken as indicative of practice' (Lees-Maffei 2003:1). Three village design statements covering the locations of five out of the six case-studies were available and have been discussed in chapter two. Despite the fact that they were published following the completion of the self-build projects in this study, they offer important information about the broader impact of planning policy and advice on contemporary and future self-build activity, and they provide new data for design historians in studies of 'design advice' and its impact on the designed environment.
Chapter One: Literature Review

'When we say that 'homes are made' rather than built, we acknowledge an interweaving of personal imagination, lived relationships and shaped surroundings. An understanding of home becomes a means for organising the world and orientating our passage through it' (Tim Putnam Household Choices 1990:7).

Introduction

There are few studies of the self-build home that address matters of user participation in design within an academic context. Literature available to self-builders (such as, Armor and Snell (2002) Build Your Own Home, Brinkley (2002) The Housebuilder's Bible and Cummins (2003) Designing and Building Your Own Home) provide practical guidance material and specialist advice to self-builders (which is mainly technical) as well as some information concerning the shape and scale of the self-build industry in the UK. The literature reviewed in this section assesses information drawn from the academic environment that is directly associated with the development of self-building as a cultural activity as well as literature that addresses theoretical and methodological issues for a study of this kind.

Literature has been drawn from studies of the built environment, architecture, studies of housing design and more broadly, literature concerned with theoretical approaches to the study of visual and material culture.

The chapter is divided into four sections: the first section describes the literature that offers political insight into the process of self-building and user participation in both building as well as building design. The second section describes literature that places the discourse of the study of houses and homes within a specifically social and cultural context. Some of the literature reviewed in these

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2 MacFarlane, R D (1986) A Critical Investigation of Self-Build Housing in Scotland, an Mphil thesis at Glasgow School of Technology is the only academic study of contemporary self-building. Although it provides a guide to the activity in Scotland and an account of the process of self-building, the thesis does not make an assessment of self-building as a cultural phenomenon.
sections is further expanded in chapter two when the development of self-building is mapped historically, considering the context of the 19th and 20th centuries. The volume of literature that deals with the theory of visual and material culture is very great indeed. Since its development as a field of critical inquiry by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964 cultural studies has burgeoned to include art, design, media and communication embracing a range of theoretical perspectives that have their origins in other subject disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Section three provides a map of the most relevant theoretical approaches that have impacted on design history and studies of material culture. Literature is explored that makes specific reference to theory in relation to the built environment and to understanding the built environment in relation to contemporary leisure and social activity. Finally, section four discusses literature on research methods, and their relevance to the subject discipline and the theoretical approaches used for the interpretation of self-building in the UK.

Political Perspectives

The political context for self-build activity, during the 20th century, has a number of dimensions. In some instances self-building has been pursued as a way to support economically disadvantaged groups as it has been shown to lower the price of new build by as much as 53 percent, depending upon the quantity of 'sweated labour' contributed by the participant (Grindley 1972:21 and in the work of Hamdi and Wilkinson (1971) for the GLC). Additionally, self-building has been seen as a way to close the quality gap that exists for lower income groups, often forced into purchasing property which is in poor repair, and in areas where property is unlikely to see substantial price increase. In other cases studied by Ward and Hardy (1984) and by Harms (1972), self-build activity takes place on marginal land or on land occupied through common law. Because of their location, these properties often evaded the legal standards for housing that would otherwise have prevented participants from acquiring their own home. The politicisation of self-building as a way for low income groups to intervene in their own housing provision was stimulated in the UK by studies made of international schemes. Grenell, (1972:116) in his study of Bhurbaneswar New Town, India
(1957), suggests that the self-build tactics used by low income groups falling outside government provision, created housing ghettos that appeared visually haphazard and were perceived negatively as 'uncontrolled.' Turner (1972:130) makes a similar point when he suggests that what is commonly referred to as 'squatter' settlements by professionals and the middle-class, should be more accurately identified as communities 'under construction.' He says of the 'barriadas' of Peru, for example, that they begin as temporary shacks or shanty towns that subsequently acquire lease or ownership agreements, resulting in settlements that provide permanent homes. However, the process may take longer than 15 years. Ward (Ward and Hardy 1984:254) also emphasises the issue of housing standards when he suggests that it is not the lack of visual uniformity per se that attracts public criticism and denies self-build projects public aid, but the context within which 'haphazardness' occurs. In contrast to the criticism levelled at plotland developments in Britain, for example in Havering Country Park and Canvey Island, Ward shows that in a high income self-build suburb in Berkeley, California, the idiosyncratic visual approaches taken by its residents are perceived by the authorities as a virtue. In fact the issues of 'planning' and of 'housing standards,' when they relate to self-building appear to take on an institutional context in that they prevent building work that falls below certain physical and aesthetic standards. In particular they attempt to restrain building development which has the appearance of subverting systems of social organisation, and especially so in contexts where the inhabitants are perceived to be economically disadvantaged or seeking an alternative lifestyle. Indeed, in addition to maintaining building quality, planning regulations offer a way to control social as well as aesthetic order (current planning policy is discussed further in chapter two). Whether the act of self-building is ever deliberately subversive is given some credence by Ward's suggestion that the roots of makeshift housing evolve from a tradition of 'pastoralism' (a desire to establish an affinity with nature and with rural traditions) and 'agrarianism' (a form of peasant proprietorship and of reclaiming land wrongly appropriated (Ward and Hardy 1984:9)). Both traditions have significance beyond the economic arguments in favour of self-building, and the notion of pastoralism will contribute to a better understanding of the motivations of self-builders within contemporary projects.
Turner (1972:148-151) finds other problems with the notion of 'housing standards' in that they say nothing of the 'suitability' of accommodation to housing needs, or of 'satisfaction' with housing. The former articulates the needs of the housing provider, the latter concerns the needs of householders. In the chapter 'Housing as a Verb' Turner argues that housing standards are measured in terms of the house as a product, such as its size, layout, facilities, position and cost. A minimum standard is a notional metric of quality set by authorities (and subject to political change) whereas housing as a verb requires sophisticated qualitative approaches to design and planning. It would necessitate measuring the 'value' or 'satisfaction' with a home, and this has very little to do with 'housing standards.' While the logic of Turner's argument appears reasonable, he observes that the benefits of self-building are 'nonquantifiable' and that they are related to self-esteem and psychological well being. In the case-studies that follow in chapter four, the complex way in which participants negotiate the issues of standards and planning (involving the intervention of professionals) around the 'vision' of the home (something that is subjectively driven), form important elements in the analysis of contemporary self-build projects and the potential of them to contribute to well being.

Another aspect to the political dimension of self-building is the way it functions in debates about housing shortages and the economic advantages of gaining a foothold on the home ownership ladder. In The Housing Crisis, Holmes (1990:200) identifies that single people on low incomes comprise one of the most significant groups for whom contemporary housing policy is likely to fail. And further to this, Malpass (1990:224) suggests rather cynically, that one remedy for this group could be to develop schemes 'modelled on third world projects in which the purchaser is provided with a site with basic services laid on and is left to build their own house.' The political context however does not favour 'incremental approaches' to building, as plans can only be submitted which demonstrate a completed project and hence the scepticism shown by Malpass of this type of approach for economically disadvantaged groups. Although the issues of building for disadvantaged groups is not the focus of this study, the cost saving of self-building as a way to provide homes within the location of choice (particularly in the South East region where land and property prices are
particularly high) does have relevance for this study. Turner for example found that within some publicly assisted schemes some 25-50 percent of costs were tied up with management and administration (1972:132) much of which can be freely absorbed when self-builders contribute their own skills to the process. Armor and Snell (2002:10) suggest that self-builders can make savings of 15-50 percent of the market value of the property due to the contribution of the self-builders own labour, and to other cost savings, including for example 'office overheads,' 'damage and loss of materials' and 'staff costs.' In the case-studies that follow in chapter four, all households took responsibility for the administrative and management aspect of the project contributing substantially to cost savings. The economic savings of self-build projects enable self-builders to solve housing problems (related to cost/location/proximity to employment/growth of family unit) through their capacity to undertake roles more usually contracted to professional services.

Another aspect of the political dimension concerns the issue of professional roles within building and architectural industries. Turner (1972:124) and others (Wate and Knevitt, 1987 and Ward, 1974) discuss what they believe to be fundamental problems within architectural and design training. He suggests that within the West much architecture is practised as if it were an independent variable, 'as though the architect had no social or political responsibilities.' Turner's work in the developing world has focused on creating models for aided self-help schemes where the architect's role is one of advisor/enabler to the community and does not attempt to define the type or the aesthetic prototype for housing which falls under such schemes. Chapter two discusses these issues in more detail. Sim in British Housing Design (1993) refers to the development of the Community Architecture movement, that from the 1960s, attempted to ameliorate some of the difficulties associated with 'user-fit' and the apparent distance of the architectural profession in social terms, from the communities of people for whom they design. Sim suggests that the difficulties of participation were often put down to technical constraints (building, fire and space regulations) and with reading technical information such as plans and blueprints. However, despite these perceived difficulties, a growing body of research (Habraken 1972, Edwards 1974, Pikusa 1983, RIBA 1983 and Darke 1984) argued that tenant (or owner) satisfaction
could only be achieved at a fundamental level when their participation involves
them in making decisions about design and planning. A number of pioneering
projects put the theory of community architecture into practice, formerly Erskine's
Byker Wall in 1972-6, Hamdi and Wilkinson's PSSHAK Scheme in Hackney in
1972 and Walter Segal's projects for the London Borough of Lewisham in 1978
and 1986. Although the emphasis of these projects was the provision of low cost
housing, they signalled a commitment to provide design and architectural
services in ways that involved participants in the decision making process.
Indeed much of the self-build industry promotes participative approaches to
design as a key feature of self-build 'packages' and uses self-assembly and 'kit'
systems to these ends.

'Framework houses owe as much to their owners as they do their
architect and builders because every building we produce is designed and
built to suit your land, your lifestyle and your budget' (advertising copy for

Social and Cultural Perspectives

The history of self-building has two distinct, yet related fields of inquiry. Firstly
there is the history of self-building within the broader subject of public and
subsidised housing. Self-building within these sectors is politically and socially
motivated in that it provides an alternative form of housing that demonstrates
respect for the capabilities of tenants in making design decisions resulting in a
closer 'fit' with their particular housing needs (for example, Rod Hackney's
scheme in Macclesfield and other Community Architecture projects discussed in
chapter two). Participation in the processes of design and building are perceived
to develop long term community benefits via social networks and in the
development of professional competencies in trade skills as a result of self-
building. This has some historical pedigree in the Garden City Movement and the
idea of creating mixed social communities where it was considered essential for
the well being of an individual 'to see the living tapestry of a mixed community'
(Aneurin Bevan in Sim 1993:54).
The second field of enquiry belongs to self-building as a form of self-enterprise, where reliance upon public support is diminished in favour of totally autonomous projects that may or may not have community-building benefits. What the latter are perceived to achieve is a marked improvement in terms of social status brought about by independence from public forms of housing provision, or by a marked improvement in the economic value of the home through the contribution of sweated labour. Ward and Hardy's (1984) study exemplifies these points, as do findings from case-studies described in chapter four where the ability to acquire a property (otherwise out of economic reach) is shown to be a key motivating factor in the desire to undertake a self-build project. The cases described by Ward also demonstrate their independence through the bespoke nature of each dwelling design, particularly in the case of plotland developments, and provide a clear contrast to the uniformity of design in the publicly assisted self-build scheme of Hamdi and Wilkinson in Hackney, London, in 1972.

In addition to the added benefits that could be described in terms of personal or social esteem through self-enterprise, the study of self-build homes will also examine the way these homes describe a complex set of social values and relations. These relate to 'institutional' attitudes about family, and family needs, as well as those of the family in terms of its group and individual identities. Various studies provide a useful context to these debates. In the post-war period, a number of Government reports formed the framework for housing reform within the public sector and offer some insight, historically, into the way social attitudes to housing have been shaped over time. The 1953 Housing Manual recommended larger dining and living spaces on the basis that children should use the whole house. Earlier the 1944 Dudley Report had criticised much 1930s development for its lack of community facilities, the rigid separation of public and private housing, and the suburban sprawl that increasingly separated home from work. The Dudley Report recommended kitchens large enough for family meals, or living rooms with a dining recess. The 'parlour' was regarded as a particularly old-fashioned notion of room use and function that did not properly reflect the needs of modern families. Dudley also emphasised the importance of neighbourhood, the most desirable social unit being 5,000-10,000 population,
with sufficient community provision being provided to encourage this aspect of social life.

Later the Parker Morris Report of 1961 paid close attention to internal house design as well as the design of site/facilities. It was recommended that bedroom spaces needed to be larger, to be used as a ‘bedsit,’ ‘study’ or for leisure activities. Housing design was clearly reflecting the changes to family structure and communication (as well as external influences like the raising of school leaving age). Housing design began to reflect the idea that individuals may need separate zones, undertaking more individualised activities than would have been conceivable in the immediate post war period. The general improvement in housing standards would also have contributed to changes in the way domestic space was used. Morris recommended complete central heating systems, enabling the family to occupy all areas of the house, where before this would have been limited to downstairs, or even a single room. Economic factors of an increasingly consumer-led society where individuals in the family began to own products personal to them would also have contributed to the notion that individuals might occupy separate ‘private’ zones.

Edwards (1974) makes further reference to room layouts in relation to ‘user-values’ by suggesting that housing design and internal layouts might not be identifiable in terms of ‘a’ standard (implied through the various attempts to do this within government reports, mainly concerned with minima). Indeed a number of studies including Rapoport (1968) The Personal Element in Housing, Oliver, Davis and Bentley (1981) Dunroamin, Miller (1988) Appropriating the State on the Council Estate and Putnam and Newton (1990) Household Choices explore the idea that user-satisfaction is gained through a process of appropriation and modification according to particular consumer ‘values’ usually informed by attitudes to lifestyle and taste rather than by metrical notions of housing standards.

In addition to the ability to design-in the social values of a household through the self-building process, a further social driver for many self-build projects, whether generated out of re-used materials on marginal land or the product of
professional design and planning services, is the achievement of 'independence' through home-ownership. Ward and Hardy (1984:18) suggest that a desire for home-ownership in the 1920s and 1930s was driven by the positive values associated with 'responsible citizenship,' 'self-enterprise' and 'thrift.' In their study of plotland developments during this period, they also point to the attraction of rural and seaside settings, promoting (in contrast with urban working class housing), health, recreation and space for the family. Despite the particular economic environment of plotland developments, it is tempting to make an analogy with the current trend for 'downshifting' providing some motive for contemporary self-builders albeit in a different historical and social setting. Indeed promotional literature for contemporary self-building (examined in chapter three) makes heavily weighted reference to aspects of 'openness,' 'spaciousness,' 'rural' and 'rustic,' as signifiers of a 'better' or more 'ideal' lifestyle. Ward's reference to 'pastoralism' (1984:9) provides a useful theoretical device to describe the conservative values that have driven the motives for many self-build projects and that has historical precedence in Garden City and earlier Arts and Crafts ideals (described in chapter two).

Another important social theme within literature on self-build homes, is the contribution the process of making performs in generating a sense of well being. This is described by Turner and Fichter in Freedom to Build (1972) adding to the debate at that time, of the social importance of housing projects that embrace participatory processes.

The process of making a home is a symbolic as well as a practical and highly skilled activity. The development of the basic function of the home in terms of providing shelter and protection for the family, and on a more complex level, to reflect a set of values, is by its nature a profound activity. Achieving such a task is developmental on many levels - attaining a range of practical, managerial and problem-solving skills, but as important is the achievement at a symbolic level, of creating 'home.' The self-build projects discussed by Turner et al are those where individuals have actually participated in the making process and who find

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3 Jones, J and Ghazi, P (1997) in Downshifting explain the concept in terms of a simplifying process enabling people 'to do less but achieve more' and doing so, gaining a better quality of life.
personal fulfilment through ‘the basic human desire to exercise control over the making of one’s environment’ (Grindley in Turner and Fichter, 1972:19).

The role of craft in theories of social well being and reform are well known within design history, having their roots in 19th century reform promoted by John Ruskin and William Morris and Arts and Crafts practitioners in architecture and decorative arts. At the heart of these debates was the notion that craft work is a spiritual and social activity, and does therefore produce objects of greater integrity. The value of craft applied not just to the object but to the whole system of production and social-life, the assumption being that craft practice offered a more satisfactory and meaningful existence than its industrial equivalent. The context of these debates made the theory of the Arts and Crafts Movement highly problematical (high volume mass and machine production being fundamental to the development of urban and Western economies). However the role of hand-making and creative work in the context of personal fulfilment and well being continues to resonate and will be examined later in the chapter in terms of the more recent rise of serious amateur activity and leisure. The social value of hand-making is not only important to Turner’s thesis but occurs more recently in Votolato’s (2000:6) introduction to the Making Buildings exhibition when he suggests that the building process is ‘a means of expressing personal identity.’ He goes on to say about the exhibition:

‘Making Buildings proposes that the craft element in architecture provides...‘added value,’ representing uniqueness, status and other cultural and ideological aspirations’ (Votolato 2000:7).

The notion that ‘hand-making’ is a process of personal investment in a thing that adds to its value, clearly has significance for a study of self-build homes in terms of what the self-build home delivers to participants in terms of personal identity and attachment to a particular and unique place, bringing about a sense of personal achievement and well being. (It should be noted however, that attaching importance to the role of craft in this way is particular to Western economies and this is discussed further in chapter three.) The self-building process is also one that necessarily involves the ‘appropriation’ of the home.
through a number of 'actions,' a process described by Korosec-Serfaty in *The Home from Attic to Cellar* (1984:317) as fundamental to spaces becoming more fully integrated with the identity of the individual.

In addition to the idea that self-building contributes to personal and social fulfilment, is the notion that the self-build home functions symbolically, as in the world of artefacts, to communicate personal, social and cultural values. This idea has been explored in some depth by Rapoport in *The Personal Element in Housing: An Argument for Open-Ended Design* (1968:300) where he discusses the way in which occupants are compelled to personalise their environment. He suggests that the need to personalise is based on two reasons: the first is related to the notion of personal control:

'The desire to personalise one's environment may be seen as a way of giving meaning to that environment. As other areas of life and work become increasingly more remote from the personal control of the individual and more de-personalised.'

The second reason is related to social structuring, where personalisation offers occupants the opportunity to make social-value statements (consciously or subconsciously) through their environment:

'...giving meaning becomes particularly important because of the emotional, personal and symbolic connotation of the house and the primacy of these aspects in shaping its form, as well as the important psycho-social consequences of the house' (1968:300).

Although Rapoport's paper is concerned with the adaptation of homes, rather than self build activity, the notion of personalisation has important ramifications for a study of self-build homes given that it is one primarily concerned with issues of cultural communication through a set of strategic or subconscious choices. Rapoport's interest in personalisation through the adaptation of existing properties is precisely because for the majority of householders this is the only way it can be achieved. In this context, self-building offers opportunities for
personalisation on a much larger scale and at all levels of design than can be achieved through the modification of existing dwellings. In *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1990), Rapoport discusses at greater length the need for 'open-endedness' in design systems to build-in opportunities for personal responses and for changes over time. The elements of the house that offer greatest flexibility are described as 'semi-fixed' and includes surfaces, screens, curtains, furniture and pictures for example. 'Fixed features,' including walls, ceilings, floors and spatial arrangement change rarely or at longer intervals, as changes to these features often require professional intervention (1990:89).

Rapoport raises important methodological issues for the observation of socio-cultural characteristics in home design and adaptation that are important for this study. To make an analysis of the way in which self-build projects communicate social value and provide opportunity for expression of personal identity, will also require some account of the features of house design that are genuinely accessible to self-builders, and further, the knowledge and skills that are required of self-builders to bring about effective design solutions.

The house as a social construct (what it articulates about the values and aspirations of households and what it says about the broader system of social and cultural meaning) contains important distinctions although they are dialectically related. O'Toole's (1994) study of the Australian suburban home provides an example of the way the broader system of social meaning can be analysed to powerful effect using structuralist methodology. In O'Toole's study the analysis of house design decodes institutional thinking about the social values (of the intended 'upper-middle class' client) through aesthetic, organisational and spatial signifiers attached to the house (as it appears in printed publicity). His research demonstrates that the design of a house functions on a highly symbolic level, communicating a range of social and cultural information about the understanding housing developers have of a particular market segment, based on schematic publicity material rather than actual homes. Many self-build homes are designed around a range of publicity models that are then adapted to the needs of individual households. Being able to successfully decode the social and cultural meaning of the self-build home will therefore be aided by an analysis of commercial models (as these act as broader cultural and
social signs) and the way that actual self-builders reject, adopt or modify such schemes to build-in social and cultural meaning at the level of the household.

Baudrillard’s (1996) *The System of Objects* provides a number of theoretical concepts for the decoding and interpretation of cultural signs. One of these is ‘functionality,’ the way an object provides a social and cultural representation of the individual, not through the symbolic role of the object, but through the relationship of the object to others in the system (through a process which is external to the object and subject).

‘...it is the whole system of needs, socialised or unconscious, cultural or practical... that threatens the objective status of the object (1996:8).’

Baudrillard uses the concept of functionality particularly for industrial (or serially) produced items suggesting that their meaning is conveyed through association with other objects within the social system. Baudrillard also refers to ‘marginal’ objects (1996:73) for example, folkloric, exotic or antique objects, as survivors of a symbolic order, where the function of the object is not utility (in a social or practical sense) but to ‘signify’ the non-material realms of modern existence (for example; memory, time, belief, values and spirituality). The concept of functionality describes the purpose of objects within a complex system of meaning and the necessarily dialectical relationship between objects, people, places and a range of cultural practices. The house cannot be understood in isolation to other house-types or categories of housing, or the lifestyle practices of a range of social groups. His concept of the marginal object and particularly the antique, has significance in this study, and this is discussed in chapter three in relationship to the prevalence of ‘old’ house types within pattern books for self-build homes. Baudrillard’s suggestion that ‘the nostalgia for origins and the obsession with authenticity’ are distinctive features of the mythology of the antique or pseudo-antique object (1996:76), may well offer a powerful explanation for the ‘slippage’ in meaning in the self-build home which is necessarily ‘new’ and the product of contemporary building processes, but which more frequently than not, parades historical signifiers.
Baudrillard's discussion of the concepts of 'choice' and 'consumption' are also important elements in an understanding of a modern system of objects:

'No object is proposed to the consumer as a single variety... The availability of the object is the foundation of 'personalisation': only if the buyer is offered a whole range of choices can he transcend the strict necessity of his purchase and commit himself personally to something beyond it. Indeed, we no longer have the option of not choosing, of buying an object on the sole grounds of its utility... Our freedom to choose causes us to participate in a cultural system willy-nilly. It follows that the choice in question is a specious one: to experience it as freedom is simply to be less sensible of the fact that it is imposed upon us as such, and that through it society as a whole is likewise imposed upon us' (1996:141).

Baudrillard's view that personalisation is itself part of a modern political construct that places the participant in a passive role seems a rather hopeless place to begin any discussion of participant involvement in the process of design, even accepting there is 'no escape' from the system of meaning given here by Baudrillard. Baudrillard's system does not encounter the realm of human 'action' in relationship to personalisation — a process of 'appropriation' that is certainly a more active and empowering theoretical proposition through which the environment is imbued with personal and cultural meaning. Putnam (1990) brings these theoretical debates into closer proximity within the research for Household Choices, when he states that:

'Homes are made from material, social and cultural resources and are bound up in the relationships which sustain those resources. The selection and appropriation of housing and commodities produced for domestic consumption, and the order and value given to domestic activities have more than private significance; they are key constituents of our economic and social order. Discourse about 'the home' contains a complex interplay of personal subjectivity and cultural ideal' (1990:7).
Understanding the meaning of the self-build home will inevitably draw on a deeper integration of these ideas. It must take account of the personal and subjective attitudes of participants to their environment, while recognising the structures of meaning that place and frame local narratives within the broader social and cultural environment.

Theoretical Perspectives

Locating the field of study

In order to locate the study of self-build homes within a broader subject discipline it is necessary to make further reference to the particular characteristics of the study as well as the academic background of the author. As an undergraduate student of art and design history in the late 1980s in a former polytechnic environment I was fortunate enough to receive an introduction to the subject that embraced traditional approaches to art history and connoisseurship as well as aspects of museum and film studies, design history and 'the new art history.' Emphasis was placed on the social and theoretical context of art and design, informed by the developments in cultural studies since the 1960s. Despite the fact that the kinds of objects studied within discourses of design history largely conformed to the categories described by Attfield (1999:374) as those of 'modern design classics and to the output of professional designers since the industrial revolution,' there was a keen sense of the breadth and potential of the subject to expand beyond this conception and indeed this was exemplified in course material which included Forty's (1986) highly contextualised Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1930. Not only did Forty place the study of design within a set of economic, technological and social conditions, but he gave detailed academic attention to the processes of production and consumption. This shift away from the study of objects as products of prominent designers, or as icons of particular historical periods, had a number of consequences for the discipline. The epistemology of the subject shifted to the more academic ground of cultural and social critique, being informed by and receiving methodological inputs from theoretical perspectives such as Marxism and feminism (for example see Callen (1979), Attfield and Kirkham (1989) and Sparke (1995)). The shift in
intent necessarily impacted on what the object of study was considered to be as historians increasingly sought to understand the object-world in relation to social and cultural phenomena (for example, in relationship to personal and national identity, youth culture and globalisation). Woodham (1997:7) describes how the subject changed its emphasis in the following way:

'It's focus has shifted quite dramatically from the cultural high ground, where individual designers, style, and aesthetic significance were dominant considerations, onto the texture of everyday life in which far greater emphasis is placed on the role and behaviour of the consumer and user.'

Thematic inquiries typically engaged the interest of disciplines across the spectrum of the humanities and it is in this broader mix of theoretical and discipline-based approaches that design historians are able to draw unique insights into the object-world. The term 'material culture' has become familiar to design historians wishing to draw from the experience of interdisciplinary-working, bringing together rather loosely, but no less usefully, a number of disciplines that offer particular insights into the study of culture.

The first issue of the Journal of Material Culture defines a common focus for the studies which are associated with the field in terms of 'the ways in which artefacts are implicated in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social identities' (Miller and Tilley 1996:5). At its core it is seeking to understand the relationship between people and things across time and geographic location and the editors maintain forcefully that this is best achieved by bringing together the knowledge different disciplines and their divergent methodologies bring to the study of cultural phenomena. As a consequence the study of material culture embraces the geographer, anthropologist, archaeologist and psychologist for their unique contribution to problems of object-subject relations. The approach of these disciplines necessarily eschews any notion of the exclusiveness of particular objects in the construction of historical and cultural discourse – quite the reverse. As Attfield suggests in a review of the relationship between material culture and design history:
'The interdisciplinary implications of a material culture approach in the study of the history of design that does not exclude any artefact or part of the mundane everyday object-world meant venturing into territories that were once considered beyond the pale' (Attfield 1999:373).

The study of self-building attempts to go beyond the pale by acknowledging that the object-subject relationship is a dynamic one being both responsive to and constituted by the culture of commodities and at the same time, the product of a creative process which has the capacity to reflect on the very nature of the object-subject relationship itself. Self-build homes are the material expression of a complex set of economic, cultural, geographic, professional and personal factors that are more effectively studied within the interdisciplinary setting of material culture studies. Indeed studies of the built environment (Miller and Tilley 1996:9) use 'houses and landscapes' to explain the value of the interdisciplinary approach in the editorial of the first issue of the Journal of Material Culture) have made extensive use of this approach because of the particular interest of academics in understanding the social impact of buildings on human sensibilities and identity.

The material discussed in the next section was chosen for the particular socio-contextual insight it offers to the study of the built environment, some of which has formed its commentary of the built environment from an essentially critical or theoretical perspective (such as Baudrillard, Jameson, Frampton and Foucault), while other material is based on disciplinary knowledge of architecture and buildings such as Lawrence, Brand, Rapoport and Eisenmann. The approaches discussed in the next section offer to the study of the built environment what Leach (1997:14) has referred to as the necessity of 'critical self-reflection' and the need for architecture to test itself 'against a broader cultural debate.'

**Theoretical perspectives on the study of objects**

Lawrence in Housing Dwellings and Homes (1987:7) describes a complex approach to the study of the built environment and is critical of conventional
models that study the built environment on a 'form/function' basis without reference to a range of temporal and social factors. In describing this he states:

'...dwelling practices simultaneously link and distinguish the house, which is a precise geometrical composition of interrelated spaces (defined by floors, ceilings, walls, doors and windows) from the home, which is that physical composition after it has been endowed with, and transformed by, psychological and social processes related to its decoration, personalisation and use.'

Lawrence makes the fundamental connection between people and the built environment, ensuring that both are accounted for in an analysis of 'home.'

Similarly Marcus in *House as Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home* (1995) bases her studies of home on what she calls 'person-place relationships' particularly in respect to the emotional ties between people and the places they inhabit. She says that the geographer, anthropologist, architect and environmental psychologist, have largely ignored this issue. Conversely the poet, novelist, playwright and film-maker have produced far more profound insights. To gain psychological insights into the emotional ties between home and homedweller, Marcus uses methods closer to therapy (in particular Gestalt). She draws upon role-play and drawing to bring about a more reflective dialogue with participants and stresses the importance of 'integration' (the process of connecting unconscious drivers with conscious realisations and actions). Her studies found that the ability of participants to gain closer insight into the unconscious self greatly assisted their process of integration, bringing about a more 'meaningful existence.' As with Lawrence (and Sixsmith and Sixsmith 1990), Marcus integrates temporal issues, highlighting the impact of 'lifestage' on case-study findings. She also found that participants that engaged in the building process came to a closer understanding of what their needs and ideas about the physical environment were. One participant reported saying:

'I'm a person who feels that intimate contact with the real world is a very important part of personality development. People who build their own
homes, I think, enjoy a privilege that's quite rare. It's a creative endeavor, one that has cemented our family about a line of action which was important to each of us, and developed before our eyes' ('Bill' in Marcus 1995:53).

Similarly, this study has drawn in biographical material to explain the significance of self-building in terms of its contribution to personal development and for what self-build homes reflect about the aspirations of individuals. Such an approach places the judgement about the significance of self-building away from notions of house form and function to an assessment of the intrinsic value of the design and building process.

In How Buildings Learn (1997), Brand also approaches the analysis of buildings by considering temporal issues ('function reforms form') where methods of analysis demonstrate the way the fabric of a building has changed over time. As with Rapoport, Brand applauds self-design and building systems that enable personal elements to be secured and adapted over time. As a counterpoint to the idea of the continual adaptation of buildings over time, Brand (1997:140) also acknowledges the persistence of 'mythical' qualities to buildings.

'Something evidently drives continuity between buildings at a mythic level. Masonry fireplaces and chimney have been utterly obsolete since the popularisation of the Franklin stove by the 1830s, yet 160 years later every house that can afford it still has at least a facsimile of a masonry fireplace and chimney. Some deep lullaby croons...'

In contrast to literature that emphasises temporal, and personal social and psychological factors in relation to the meaning of the built environment, Alexander's A Pattern Language (1977) proposes a very different approach. Alexander's work attempts to show a common pattern (and language) in the planning and design of communities ranging from issues to do with 'region,' to architectural details within a home such as alcoves and closets. A Pattern Language is a mammoth work, detailing some 253 patterns and is fascinating in that it considers the design of spaces alongside human actions and interactions.
However, *A Pattern Language* appears to resist the tensions that occur when ‘shared’ and ‘common’ patterns for design are established within a society that is stratified socially and is fragmented culturally, and where solutions to design problems might be imported from different cultural contexts, or subverted (as in the case of deconstructionist architecture). There are other problems too in Alexander’s derivation of ‘invariants’ (certain, if not universal solutions to design problems) in that they do not consider temporal adjustments to user needs, nor are they described in terms of their ‘mythic’ qualities. For example in Massey’s article *Inventing the Home* (1999), aspects of space-use in the home are challenged within a typically postmodern context. She gives the example of the presence of global information technology and the flow of information within domestic environments that impacts on the analysis of home and its traditional associations. Particularly, she examines the relationship of the home to work and considers the visibility of work (and computers) within contemporary homes. Massey concludes that the home represents a combination of new social complexities as well as conforming to other, more traditional (but by no means universal) associations.

Like Lawrence, Rapoport in *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1990) also discusses the built environment in relationship to people, suggesting that the built environment offers powerful clues about identity, both self- and group-, and the broader socio-cultural context these are constructed within. He describes three theoretical approaches for the study of meaning in the built environment: semiotic, symbolic and the use of non-visual communication.

While he acknowledges that semiotic models are more frequently used than the other two, he argues that semiotic approaches have a tendency to become highly abstracted and concerned with the relationship between signs and signifying structures, rather than on the study of meaning. He does refer to the usefulness of ‘pragmatics’ (1990:38), however, and the relationship of signs to the behavioural responses of people, as a useful theoretical tool to examine the way people respond to clues in the built environment. Despite Rapoport’s reservations over the use of semiotics, there are useful examples in the work of O’Toole (1994) and Fiske (1990) that provide detailed analyses of the meaning of
spatial, two- and three-dimensional cultural forms using this method. These are explained further in chapter three where a semiotic study is made of self-build company advertisements.

The idea that elements of the environment have symbolic meaning has been discussed widely within cultural anthropology and within studies of the built environment. Baudrillard refers to objects that act as cultural counterpoints to objects that have a functional presence – survivals of a symbolic order that signal memory, nostalgia or escapism (1996:73). Bourdieu (1992:267) also discusses the way in which cultural acts as well as objects contribute to the symbolic order of a society (for example, the acquisition of fine art) and to the identification and maintenance of class groups. Brand (1997) discussed previously, also refers to 'mythic' elements in the built environment, whose meaning has potency beyond any functional necessity. Rapoport (1990) also suggest that the study of symbolic elements of the built environment serves to gain access to 'shared values' within a culture or community. The identification of symbols can also be observed within studies drawing upon phenomenology (discussed later) as this can reveal 'deep' as well as shared meanings within a culture.

The use of non-verbal communication for the study of the built environment involves 'looking directly at various environments and settings and observing the cues present in them, identifying how they are interpreted by others – that is, the particular meanings these cues have for human behaviour, affect, and so on' (Rapoport 1990:87). It is a method that can be used to study a variety of data including the relationship of human behaviour with the built environment. This approach is also referred to as 'grounded theory' - familiar to sociologists and ethnomethodologists in as much as it is concerned less with the discovery of hidden cultural meaning but in the 'ways in which ordinary actors use or make sense of this visual information in the course of everyday, practical routines' (Emmison and Smith 2000:58). However, given that the non-verbal environment lacks the linearity of verbal communication, meaning can be more arbitrary and ambiguous (this is discussed in more detail in relationship to the use of visual data for semiotic analysis in chapter three).
All three approaches described by Rapoport and others provide important theoretical approaches for the study of visual data. In addition to elevating the status of visual information within studies of culture is the sensation that the data itself is valuable beyond simply 'what it means or refers to.' Rapoport, as well as O'Toole, for example, also stresses the fact that the reading of the built environment, as with other cultural texts, depends on the relative 'positions' of 'encoders' and 'decoders.' He differentiates between the 'positions' of the establishment/profession (perceptual responses), and those of users/lay people (affective responses) and that within these groups issues of class, gender and culture inevitably impact. His studies of the way people have personalised their homes (Rapoport 1968) tests this proposition (that users renegotiate the physical environment to gain a closer match with their personal identity, in part at least rejecting the values of professionals and the architectural or planning establishment.) Miller (1988), in his study of the appropriation of the physical environment by council tenants, also explores the way meaning is generated and negotiated by different human agents often resulting in quite complex readings of the built environment.

Baudrillard's (1996) *The System of Objects* offers a combination of structuralist/ Marxist and even psychoanalytical methodology. Drawing upon semiotic models, Baudrillard explores the world of the commodity, replacing the idea that objects have 'use-value' with the idea that they have 'sign-value,' and it is this latter concept that gives the commodity potency of meaning. His various theories about how signs function in a world saturated by images and commodities has been fundamental to describing the postmodern context and the role of objects within this. Baudrillard's theories have lead to greater critical awareness of the function of objects as signs and the role of 'agents' (the media for example) in shaping the semiotic environment. The development of the consumer society and the access to cultural commodities that modern systems of manufacture have created, has generated certain 'freedoms' in the appropriation of cultural forms (which is explored in relation to self-build design models in chapter three).
A number of commentators on the postmodern condition describe the effect such 'freedoms' may have had. Some, including Baudrillard, have rejected the idea that Western culture has generated freedoms at all — referring to consumption not as a system of choice and free will but '...the organisation of all things into a signifying fabric: consumption is the virtual totality of all objects and messages ready-constituted as a more or less coherent discourse. If it has any meaning at all, consumption means an activity consisting of the systematic manipulation of signs' (1996:200).

The German philosopher Habermas, has similarly criticised the postmodern environment where modernism has been replaced with what he calls 'the cult of the vernacular and reverence for the banal' (Habermas in Modern and Postmodern Architecture in Leach 1997:232). Indeed, what stood at the heart of modernist architecture was enlightenment thinking and a true engagement in the nature of modern society. Equally, Jameson, in The Constraints of Postmodernism (1994:197) suggests that what in one sense might be construed as architecture liberated from the over-formalised language of modernism, is in reality, the product of systems of mechanisation that have the ability to create niche or unique products, and are the result of post-Fordist marketing strategies. Jameson describes this in the following way:

'Post-Fordism puts the new computerised technology to work by custom-designing its products for individual markets. This has been called postmodern marketing, and it can be thought to 'respect' the values and cultures of the local population by adapting its various goods to suit those vernacular languages and practices. Unfortunately this inserts the corporations into the very heart of local and regional culture, about which it becomes difficult to decide whether it is authentic any longer...'

A key critical theme within the study of self-build homes is to examine whether the participation of individuals in the design and building process provides opportunities to make sense of architectural meaning at a local (personal) level, and through the activity of self-building, contest the logic of postmodern systems of production and marketing. Chapter three takes a sustained look at the
promotional material of self-build companies to test Jameson's proposition, while chapter four examines the experiences of self-builders to assess in what way a self-reflection of need, aspiration and personal identity, can inform design decisions.

The development of poststructuralism since the 1970s has contributed to the development of meta-level critical discourse about material culture and this too has affected approaches to the study of the built environment as well as the language of architecture. Eisenmann, known for his deconstructionism, has developed an architectural language that is overtly reflective, critical, experimental. Typically, the deployment of poststructuralist methods will attempt to expose the inadequacy of conventional wisdom by giving greater emphasis to issues of cultural specificity, and to notions of time and space. Eisenmann (in Leach 1997:293) challenges, for example, the form of the conventional house insisting that 'while a house today must still shelter, it does not need to symbolise or romanticise its sheltering function, to the contrary such symbols are today meaningless and merely nostalgic.' Indeed, chapters two and three give consideration to the question of the 'nostalgic impulse' of much contemporary domestic building and the role of planning policy in informing aesthetic decisions.

This questioning of what is 'self-evident' and attempts to 'dismantle' conventional concepts are essential techniques within critical discourses of material culture and provide useful tools for this study. Foucault is of particular importance, in that his method throws light on the interpretation of contemporary spaces. In his essay Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias (1985:9-17 in Leach 1997:351) Foucault refers to conceptual systems for the organisation of space that have persisted over time:

'It may be, in fact, that our lives are still ruled by a certain number of unrelenting opposites, which institutions and practice have not dared erode. I refer here to opposites that we take for granted, such as the contrast between public and private space, family and social space, cultural and utilitarian space, the space of pleasure and space of work – all opposites that are still actuated by a veiled sacredness.'
He also suggests that in addition to these conceptual categories, are a further set of perceptual oppositions (and he acknowledges Bachelard) that are specific ones (in time and space) 'saturated with qualities, and that may even be pervaded by a spectral aura' (1997:194).

It is on the axis where conceptual and perceptual iterations of space converge that the shear complexity of meaning in material culture manifests itself.

Foucault describes a further theoretical tool that has importance for this study. He attempts to find two categories of space that define all spaces and at the same time, allows for the definition of space in heterogeneous ways. The first category is that of 'utopias,' 'arrangements which have no real space... They represent society itself brought to perfection, or its reverse...' (in Leach 1997:352). The other type of space concerns real spaces, 'which are outlined in the very institutions of society...' and as such they define the structure of that culture and society – these he calls heterotopias. Foucault describes the principles of heterotopias in some detail in terms of their basic structures, relationship to time and space, and to other spatial concepts. He does not quite restrict himself to these two categories however, but acknowledges the possibility of a third type of space, 'that sort of mixed experience which partakes of the qualities of both types of location, the mirror' (in Leach 1997:352). His use of the mirror as a metaphor for this third type of space has important ramifications for a study of personally derived space. It recognises that what we see in the mirror is in part a simple reflection of a real environment (perceptual), but also in part a reflection of the qualities we have 'imagined' our environment to be (conceptual).

The use of phenomenology within studies of material culture influenced the development of Foucault's poststructuralism. A particularly important approach, phenomenology describes texts, 'as they appear in the consciousness' or as they appear as a result of other forms of human agency and activity. It suggests that readers give form and meaning to texts of all kinds through the process of realising it mentally or through their experiences of it (including sensory experiences). The 'text' is formed and continually adapted and changed through
a process of conscious and subconscious, mental and physical interaction. Tilley (1994:10-11) in *A Phenomenology of Landscape*, describes why the use of phenomenology is critical to an understanding of social space:

'Socially produced space combines the cognitive, the physical and the emotional into something that may be reproduced but is always open to transformation and change. A social space, rather than being uniform and forever the same, is constituted by differential densities of human experience, attachment and involvement. It is above all contextually constituted, providing particular settings for involvement and the creation of meaning. The specificity of place is an essential element in understanding its significance. It follows that the meanings of space always involve a subjective dimension and cannot be understood apart from the symbolically constructed lifeworlds of social actors.'

What Tilley identifies is that the ability to interpret spatial environments is dependent on gaining an understanding of the way space is experienced as well as its basis in a whole series of symbolic activities and events. Indeed, 'place' as opposed to 'space' is a far more appropriate term (used by Tilley) for the environments that form the basis of this study. The places that are evolved through the activity of self-building contain information about attitudes to domestic architecture, but they also contain personal biographies, family memories, and information about identity. The latter necessarily makes each place unique, the qualities of which need capturing if the full meaning of self-building is to be examined.

Bachelard's often quoted work, *The Poetics of Space* (1969), offers powerful insights into the way the house functions symbolically and is formed in the subconscious (the childhood house, the old house, the house that protects and the house that is open to the world) and is brought into consciousness through touch, reverie and dialogue.

Heidegger, in *Building, Dwelling, Thinking* (in Leach 1997:101) offers a useful etymology of the linked meanings of the verbs building and dwelling. Indeed he
urges us to think of the activity of building as providing a context for dwelling 'in the sense of preserving and nurturing' and actualising our existence in the world. The use of phenomenology demands that we pay attention to 'how' we exist, the marks we make on the landscape to represent that existence, as well as the effects of the marks on the landscape. Clearly it is a model that privileges the experience of people in relation to space over traditional, more abstract academic models – such as the study of house form historically, or as a cultural or economic construct, and it penetrates to a deeper and more personal level of meaning than semiotic studies alone provide.

Phenomenology, like other theoretical insights described in this section, offers the potential for more sophisticated and critically reflective approaches to the study of material culture than a single method from a single discipline may impose. It is appropriate that a combination of critical theories is used to analyse and interpret the material gathered for this study. The primary objective is to stimulate a reflective and sympathetic discourse that properly takes into account the values and perceptions of participants, interpreting these within particular economic, social and cultural contexts. The theoretical approaches must also equate with research method, providing an effective strategy for the analysis of visual, verbal and spatial data.

A theoretical framework for the consideration of self-building as an amateur cultural activity

The previous section has explored how a study of material objects might be made and the theoretical approaches to the study of objects in relation to social actors and actions that have importance for this study, paying particular attention to those that have addressed the built environment.

This section places the self-builder within the context of the amateur and ideas associated with the emergence of 'serious leisure' and in so doing attempts to establish a theoretical framework for considering self-building as part of the post-modern condition through its potential to articulate new cultural, social and economic relations.
Production and consumption (shaping of post-structural codes)

It has been discussed previously that theories of consumption have helped to inform the interpretation of objects, particularly in relation to 'choice,' thought to be essential for signifying social and cultural relations within modern capitalist systems. It has also been suggested that although theories of consumption have provided many powerful analyses of contemporary culture as well as critiques, the issue about how within modern systems of production and consumption, human agents can engage in meaningful cultural activity, still remains a vexed one.

Recent literature as part of the Demos project The Good Life (Christie and Nash 1998) has attempted to bring about an understanding of some of the key inhibitors and opportunities for pursuing the good life, much of which flows from a critique of consumer culture and Western economic growth.

The starting point for the discussion about what may constitute the good life begins (as this study does) with understanding what constitutes well being, and what the 'satisfiers' of well being might be. The article by Jackson and Marks 'Found Wanting?' discusses models developed for identifying human need since the psychologist Abraham Maslow developed the hierarchy of human needs in Motivation and Personality in 1954. Using the more recent Human-Scale Development model developed in Sweden, nine categories of fundamental need are identified, including; subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, identity, idleness, creation and freedom. Further to this, the authors make links between these categories of need and changing patterns of consumption over the last forty years. What they found was that consumer spending had increased during the period by just over 100 percent although this was not even across the range of categories of consumer spending. For example, there was only a 14 percent increase in spending on books, education and newspapers and 29 percent on food, but a 400 percent increase on spending in the category of recreation and entertainment and a 341 percent increase in spending on communication (such as telephone and personal computing). What
the authors deduce from this is intriguing. They suggest that consumer spending is increasingly targeted at those areas of human need associated with participation, identity and creation (what they refer to as non-material) rather than those that are material (subsistence and protection). That while consumer spending has continued to grow in the areas of material need, such as housing, beyond a certain level of provision, this tends to flatten out, compared with our non-material needs (associated with quality of life), which appear to go on wanting.

The authors ask the legitimate question, 'does the dramatic rise in expenditure in recreation and entertainment correspond with an equally dramatic rise in the satisfaction of needs such as participation, identity, creation...?' (Jackson and Marks 1998:36). They go on to conclude that there would appear to be no such link, and that paradoxically, materialism inhibits rather than promotes the satisfaction of material needs. Indeed they suggest:

'...it is easy to project our own need to be creative on to objects that we can own, which other people have created – perhaps this is the inevitable conclusion of the 'division of labour,' we can only glimpse the possibility of our needs being met through the labour of others.'

This thesis began by setting out the context of John Turner's proposition that user participation in housing stimulates individual and social well being, based on his experiences working within the developing world. Turner had understood over 30 years ago that in an economic environment where the acquisition of good housing was not an option for the majority of the population, participation in the process of production was however, and that such a process delivered both material and non-material benefits. The Demos discussion about the need to pursue development models that place a high value on qualitative measures of the good life, rather than quantitative ones, is pertinent to the hypothesis of this study and the notion that self-building, as a participative and creative process, has the potential to stimulate well being. Fundamental to this proposition is the notion of the producer-consumer, where a person is actively engaged in defining the thing to be produced and is also the end user, and as such not only gains
economically from the activity (through the contribution of labour), but from the
creative process of production.

The Demos publication also provides pointers to the types of activity that provide
sources of satisfaction and that contribute to the fulfilment of non-material needs.
Argyle, a social psychologists contributing to the study suggests that activities
which are challenging, but that can be met with existing skills, provide high levels
of satisfaction. He includes in this forms of ‘serious or committed leisure’ (Argyle
1998:45), for example, rock climbing, that demands concentration, skill and
striving to obtain a particular goal or end. Similarly, the sociologist Stebbins
(1992) also refers specifically to types of ‘serious leisure’ and the attributes of
these activities that demand perseverance, knowledge and skill, durable benefits,
as well as having a unique ethos to the activity which has the capacity to build
individual identity.

Discussion of the role of leisure in society had also been a key theme within the
work of Lefebvre (in Highmore 2002:129) who observed that ‘leisure is both a
continuation of the alienation of work and also its critique.’ Leisure both reflects
the compartmentalisation of life into separate specialised activities and provides
the site for creative activity and resistance to alienated modern life. Similarly,
Shivers and DeLisle (1997:105) refer to the importance of leisure in providing
opportunities to ‘surmount the obligations of work, family and citizenship, to
renew his or her own uniqueness.’ Indeed leisure is seen here as an essential
element of modern life and capable of constructing and transforming social
identities. If these explanations support the characterisation of leisure in modern
life they may also serve as a way to explain types of ‘serious’ or ‘professionalised’
amateur activity (including self-building), albeit with an important and crucial
distinction.

Amateur (from the Italian ‘amatore’) embraces a whole range of activities from
flower arranging, astronomy and photography, which are pursued without formal
training or accreditation and without financial gain, for the sheer love of doing it.
Leadbeater (2003:24) suggests that we are seeing the emergence of a new
‘culture of amateurism’ that departs from the once ‘gentlemanly’ hobbies of the
idle upper class, to a vibrant part of a 'more democratic culture.' A number of factors have lead to the development of the amateur, not least the fact that leisure time is more broadly available and that many people retire earlier than a generation ago. However, these are not the only factors and Leadbeater points out that the rise of a more serious and purposeful amateur culture is very much connected to falling prices in communications and the accessibility of specialised knowledge. He suggests that 'professional control of formal knowledge is increasingly challenged by well-informed amateurs' (Leadbeater 2003:24). A further factor is the availability of professional-quality tools, particularly to the more affluent amateur. Leadbeater refers to the field of astronomy as an example, where many amateurs obtain the quality of equipment that only a handful of the worlds observatories could afford 20 years ago (Leadbeater 2003:25). A further example is the field of graphic design, where the development of computer-based design tools for the amateur has lead to debates within the profession about how they should distinguish their work (Whitehouse 2002:170). This study places self-build activity within the same context as these other forms of new and 'serious' amateur activities, not least because the scale of investment and the size of the challenge should qualify it as one of the most serious of all amateur pursuits. Chapter two discusses in more detail the development of the self-build industry over the last 20 years and the systems and tools that have made both design and construction more widely available to the amateur designer and builder.

However the concept of the amateur is important not just for placing self-build activity alongside others that have been made possible through the conditions described above, but for what this particular amateur activity (as others) can produce qualitatively – in terms of well being.

For example, in his review of amateur robotics, Schrage (2003:18) suggests that 'amateurs enjoy a special niche in the ecology of innovation because they are simultaneously both creators and consumers: they adapt and adopt.' And in the process of creation, the amateur has cause for reflection both on the purpose of the thing they are creating and the appropriateness of its form to personal and family needs, identity and locale – indeed it has the potential to address some of
the most crucial aspects of non-material need and well being. Further to the proposition that amateur activity is capable of developing well being is the special context of the activity within home design and building. The design psychologist Israel (2003:56) identifies the meaning of home in terms of the provision of shelter (material need), but also as a provider of psychological, social and aesthetic satisfaction, suggesting that the home functions to enhance a range of non-material needs.

It is suggested therefore that the study of the material culture or artefact of the 'professional-amateur' will provide particular insights and understanding of the way well being is stimulated through the particular cultural activity of self-building. Central to the theoretical framework for such a study is the concept of the producer-consumer and the notion that well being is stimulated through the particular attributes of 'serious' or 'professionalised' amateur activity which has been defined as providing a purposeful goal or end, the use of specialised knowledge and skill and a process which is participative - having the capacity for reflection and creativity.

This study will demonstrate how self-building contributes to well being by testing the extent to which the attributes of professionalised amateur activity are present in the case-study material, and how consistently. The discussion of this material and the findings of the research are presented in chapters four and five.

The next section discusses research methodology by reviewing literature associated with qualitative approaches to studies of culture. It proposes the use of methods that are sympathetic to the theoretical propositions outlined in this and the previous section and the nature and challenges of data arising from studies of people and their environments.

**Research Methodology**

The emphasis within the theoretical approaches described above, are those that are sympathetic to the interpretation of meaning in relationship to people and their environment. This necessarily requires a research method that admits data
based on people/place observations, witness testimony, as well as visual and spatial data. Given the importance of the 'interpretation of meaning' over the gleaning of 'facts' in this inquiry it is appropriate that the study should draw upon qualitative research methods. While it is the case that this study focuses on interpretation and discussion of meaning over fact, it is not attempting to establish this by way of discovering 'causal law.' Alasuutari (1995) refers to this type of research as 'idiographic' in that it attempts to provide explanations rather than solutions to problems.

Perhaps the most comprehensive work on qualitative research is Denzin and Lincoln's *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000), providing not only the context for the development of qualitative research historically, but the link between research method and theory, as well as providing tools for interpreting qualitative data.

In their discussion about the changing nature of research practice, they suggest that the development of postmodern theory has made a significant impact on both what researchers use as data as well as how they represent data within research:

'The postmodern moment was defined in part by a concern for literary and rhetorical tropes and narrative turn, a concern for story telling, for composing ethnographies in new ways...this moment was shaped by a new sensitivity, by doubt, by a refusal to privilege any method or theory. But now, at the beginning of the 21st century, the narrative turn has been taken. Many have learned how to write differently, including how to locate themselves in their texts' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:3).

Qualitative research is well suited to the postmodern environment in that a broad range of data sources, examined through interpretative practices, are admissible. Indeed qualitative research emphasises depth and close scrutiny of data as part of a process of generating meaning, over more positivist approaches that attempt to secure objective reality and locate a 'truth.'
A key way that qualitative researchers attempt to secure depth of study is through their own proximity to the subject. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) refer to qualitative research as a 'situated activity that locates the observer in the world.' They also suggest that the domain of qualitative research is the 'world of lived experience...where individual belief and actions intersect with culture' (2000:8). This not only places emphasis on the relationship between different texts (such as people and place), but on the 'immersion' of the qualitative researcher in their subject and their receptivity to the variety of potential data sources in the environment. These issues are particularly apposite for this study, in that the quality of case-study material is dependent on discursive personal testimonies as well as the opportunity to test the statements of participants through an observation of the home environment. And achieving both of these is dependent on establishing relationships of trust.

Despite the emphasis within qualitative research on 'meaning' over 'causation,' the onus on the qualitative researcher is nevertheless to establish the reliability of their interpretation. The use of multiple methods — referred to as 'triangulation' — is the way in which researchers ascertain reliability.

‘...the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question. Objective reality can never be captured. Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation... The combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth and depth to any single investigation' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:119).

Lincoln and Guba (2000:179) describe further the difficulty of establishing the reliability of data associated with 'human phenomena' where the research subject lies in the realm of 'feeling and emotion' - how then can the reliability of data be established. Clearly what the authors describe is a situation - now common - where the researcher is looking for other ways to establish if not the 'truth,' then
'...logical reasoning, plausible alongside some other reality that is known to the reader and author.' What Lincoln and Guba refer to as 'cocreated constructions.'

One such strategy, that combines the issue of validity with the ethical importance attached to the representation of participants, is to allow the 'voice' of both the participant and the researcher to enter the text. There is a real sense in contemporary literature on qualitative research that a fundamental shift has occurred in the relationship of 'author/researcher' to subject/participant, and that in redefining this relationship, and establishing greater equality between these roles, the texture of original data resonates more powerfully and independently within the research.

One aspect of qualitative research that has redefined the relationship between researcher and participant in terms of the veracity of data derived, is the use of participant observation. Jorgensen in Participant Observation — A Methodology for Human Studies (1989) discusses the importance of getting the 'insiders perspective' and gaining access to data that is essentially hidden from view or is private. It is also the way that qualitative researchers gain a true understanding of the participants world (particularly if this is foreign or specialist) and in so doing, secure a more effective interpretation of their material. Jorgensen describes this as follows:

'It is not possible to acquire more than a very crude notion of the insiders' world, for instance, until you comprehend the culture and language that is used to communicate its meanings. Greater comprehension requires that you understand the words of a language, as they are used in particular situations. Insiders manage, manipulate, and negotiate meanings in particular situations, intentionally and unintentionally obscuring, hiding or concealing these meanings further from the viewpoint of outsiders' (1989:14).

Clearly there are advantages to participant observation where the researcher becomes a true insider, however, there are a number of ethical issues that arise from this. Not least is the fact that the researchers role may be deliberately
camouflaged obfuscating the type of relationship with participants that research within a postmodern context attempts to secure. Jorgensen acknowledges that participant observation can occur at any point between the two poles of 'complete insider' and 'complete outsider' but warns that the researcher as outsider, while assuming their true role, may find themselves subject to 'normative responding,' where participants formulate preconceived ideas about the responses researchers are looking for. The use of observation for case-study work that draws upon visual and aural texts, as well as human phenomena within the environment, is likely to safeguard against this type of responding, or at least make visible any contradictions that might occur as a consequence of normative responding.

The diversity of data used within qualitative research makes it particularly appropriate for studies of visual culture as well as providing the opportunity to discover something of the complexity of human action and experience. Needless to say, it is the reason why, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:9), poststructuralists have rejected quantitative method 'contending that it merely produces 'a' view of a subject, where many views exist, if those views are permitted as part of the methodological framework.'

Emmison and Smith (2000:5) in *Researching the Visual: Images, Objects, Contexts and Interactions in Social and Cultural Inquiry*, suggest that what counts as data may be as wide ranging as 'glances, food, waiting rooms, parks, flags.' Rapoport (1990:11) also emphasises the sheer diversity of data including 'travel descriptions, novels, stories, songs, newspaper reports, illustrations, sets for television and advertisements.' Typically, these authors perceive all data as equal in standing in that they all contribute to a complex narrative about the way people see, feel, interact with and respond to their social and cultural environment. In addition to physical, spatial and human forms of data, Emmison and Smith (2000:135) acknowledge less conventional, yet powerful sources of data that are the consequence of wear (observation of erosion) and of deposits on things (observation of accretion). Indeed, observations of these forms of data provide temporal evidence about the uses and care of things and environments:
'They pick things up, carry them, they wear them, they drop them, they wash them, they polish them, they tread on them and so on. All of these activities provide fuel for visual sociology. Importantly they allow us to develop behavioural measures. That is to say, they allow us to make inferences based upon what people actually do' (Emmison and Smith 2000:110).

Not only is the diversity of data available to qualitative researchers very great, but using a combination of data within a study, or an individual case, is important as it generates a broader range of interpretative views and lends rigor, depth (and reliability) to qualitative studies. It also necessitates the need for a clear conceptual framework through which to analyse and interpret data and generate coherent 'crystalisations,' (Richardson in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:5) patterns and structures of meaning. In the study of self-building, a combination of empirical data (observation of the environment, witness testimony) and other primary sources (self-build brochures, advertisements) are analysed using the theoretical and conceptual tools developed through the construction of the historical and social context of the subject. The centralising concept is 'well-being' and how the satisfaction of well-being is enabled through the process of self-building. Other concepts such as those of identity, economic, social and personal development (of the self-builder) are closely located around the concept of well-being, while others (for example, the concept of the amateur and postmodernity) are both explanatory and contextualising, and relate the study of self-building back to the broader subject field of design history.

A further important aspect of qualitative research is the development of case-studies. Stake (in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:437) describes three types of case-study: the 'intrinsic' case-study where the researcher's interest is in the particularity of the single case (and not because it represents other cases or for the purpose of achieving theoretical or other generalisations); the second type is described as the 'instrumental' case-study. This is where the study of a case plays a supporting role in establishing an understanding of something external to it. And the third type, 'collective' case-studies, is where (as in this study) the researcher draws upon a number of individual cases where it is believed they will
lead to a better understanding and theorising, of a still larger number of potential cases. This is not to say that each case represents a similar range of concepts, or that participants respond to the questions put them in a consistent way. However, it is the intention of the research to understand self-building as a culturally situated activity that asserts the distinctions between cases, as well as generate broad theorisations of self-building as a category of cultural activity. Stake (in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:436) defines a case-study as one that can be discretely identified in that it offers a 'unique bounded system.' In this study these are identified as individual self-build projects completed by a household (although data sources are various, including for example photographs, drawings, plans and witness testimonies). Stake makes no specific reference to the number of cases needed within 'collective' case-studies. However he makes the following suggestion:

'The researcher examines various interests in the phenomena, selecting a case of some typicality, but leaning towards those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn. My choice would be to examine that case from which we feel we can learn the most. That may mean taking the ones most accessible...Potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness' (in Denzin and Lincoln 2000:446).

Stake further explains the limitations of all collective case-studies in that they are never likely to be sufficiently quantitative to 'represent' the totality of the phenomenon. He suggests that cases should be selected for their 'typicality' against a hypothetical case so that it is possible to frame the interpretation of a small number of cases based on how near or far they fall from what might be viewed as a typical scenario.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this section attempts to identify key thematic, theoretical and methodological issues that constitute a framework for the study of self-build homes.
A number of these appear to relate to the agents involved in the self-build process, most notably self-builders, and what they 'gain' from the process of self-design and self-building. Some important thematic issues arise concerning this, for example, the economic capital that is generated in exchange for sweated labour and the contribution of professional and administrative skills. In addition to economic gain (or advantage) and its relationship to social empowerment and self-enterprise, is the idea that self-building provides an alternative strategy to conventional systems of house-purchasing, operating outside the usual government and commercial apparatus. Having demonstrated this, it is suggested (Turner 1972 and Ward and Hardy 1984) that self-building can generate not only alternative housing solutions, but aesthetic ones, and that this in itself may provide a context for self-expression and an opportunity to challenge orthodox solutions to housing design. Indeed, the ability to create a home that is a response to the individual circumstances of the participants, including for example lifestage and lifestyle, is what makes self-building a unique cultural phenomena and one worthy of critical attention. It is an activity that provides an opportunity for creative work, for developing knowledge and skills and providing participants with significant 'reward'. Another theme that concerns the motivation to self-build is the idea of 'pastorialism' described by Ward. This concept points to the possibility that self-build performs a symbolic function - an opportunity to 're-connect' with natural systems and rural traditions, to reflect on who we are in relation to 'place.'

In addition to the self-builder are the agents that perform legal and professional functions. And these too, it has been shown, have an influence on the type of properties that self-builders create. The process of negotiation and subsequent modification of plans as a consequence of professional intervention (building standards and planning policy) clearly impact on the aspirations self-builders have for their schemes, and subsequently their level of 'satisfaction' with the project after completion. Case-studies will necessarily highlight the fact that what describes itself as a process which is very much 'self' generated, is in fact one which is to some extent 'negotiated' both within the household and with factors external to it.
The literature review also demonstrates the emphasis that has been given to the 'politics of participation' as a key to greater user satisfaction with housing design and as a factor in studies of contemporary well being (through the rise of the serious amateur). This is described mostly in the context of public housing although it is a theme that is stressed heavily within promotional literature for self-building in the private sector and this will be examined in some detail in chapter three. The literature relating to participation also identifies the difficulty of 'measuring' levels of satisfaction and makes its assumptions based on qualitative indicators (such as user control over decision-making). The degree of participation in contemporary self-build projects, the opportunity it affords for building in self-expression and the incorporation of individual design features, are critical themes that are tested within the case-studies in chapter four.

Another important theme to emerge from the literature, is the assertion that self-building shares some of the attributes of craft practice, and as a consequence, offers a level of self-fulfilment for self-builders through the process of making. Specifically, that the process of making informs and reflects personal identity through the range of decisions that are made about form, process, technique and materials, within particular local circumstances. In addition to a series of issues relating to the choice and manipulation of materials is the idea that these 'actions' support a process of 'appropriation' that integrates the individual with the object (Korosec-Serfaty 1984). A number of questions arise from this: for example, to what extent does self-building develop making skills; how unique and personal is the object to the individuals who created it; and how 'meaningful' is the home as a consequence of the close level of 'user-participation.'

Many of the questions raised here refer to people-place relationships and can be studied within the bounded system of the self-builder and their respective project. However, the literature review also demonstrates that self-building, as well as self-build products and services, operate within larger social and cultural systems that also impact upon attitudes to home and influence aesthetic decisions. Indeed it has been shown that the meaning of home operates on a number of levels depending on the position of the agent (for example manufacturer, owner,
purchaser) and asserts social and cultural signifiers (O’Toole 1994, Baudrillard 1996) placing all objects within a system of meaning. Particular categories of object are displaced from the system such as folkloric, exotic and antique objects, providing clues about the persistence of certain ‘mythical’ associations about housing style that can be observed in many models for self-build projects (examined in chapter three). The analysis of self-build homes must therefore have a double aspect: it must consider the home as a unique expression of the identity and lifestyle needs of a household (and as such has biographical content) and it must also consider the home as a reflection of a modern system of manufacture, consumption, social and cultural values.

The theoretical approaches discussed here are those that offer a relevant and supportive mechanism for interpreting people-place relationships and have some track record within studies of visual and material culture. A further purpose of the literature review was to identify research methods that are sympathetic to forms of visual, verbal and spatial data and that provide a framework for the interpretation of data and the derivation of its meaning. In this context, particular qualitative research methods have been identified that have the capacity to embrace a full range of data sources, including anecdotal, empirical and more traditional forms of text. The use of the case-study in conjunction with semiotic analysis appears sufficiently sensitive to take account of multiple views and the possibility of ‘fractured’ meaning occurring in the interpretation of texts. The primary research for this study has drawn on the potential of qualitative research to engage in detailed and intensive forms of analysis of a small number of cases. The purpose is not to find the ‘generic’ or ‘common’ factors existing within self-build projects, but to account for the particular, local and personal experiences of self-builders, some of which may be common to self-building as a particular category of cultural activity. Indeed, a further purpose of the research is to build an understanding of these experiences within contemporary society and as a form of contemporary cultural production. To achieve this it is necessary to map the historical development of self-building and to construct an ideological framework for the consideration of contemporary self-build activity.
Chapter Two: Mapping the Development of Self-Build

'The Englishman's way of living is now seven centuries deep. His house is still his castle, whether it is large or small, in town, country, suburb or garden city. It is certainly not 'a machine for living in': it is something more human and civilised and comfortable – it is a home' (John Gloag, The Englishman's Castle 1945:163).

Introduction

There are a variety of themes that connect today's self-build activity with the historical development of the building industry, and associated activities, not least legislation and planning regulations, and changes in the housing stock connected to economic as well as ideological factors.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual framework in which to consider the self-build industry in the UK today and to trace the themes that have a historical basis and inform the approaches and expectations of self-builders. The intention is not to provide a detailed history of house building, or housing style, or provide a detailed account of planning law. Rather, it will show how these themes are linked to the development of the self-build industry and contribute to the particular characteristics of self-building over other conventional forms of house purchase.

The Context of the Nineteenth Century

One of the most important themes arising from the 19th century concerns the relationship between vernacular forms of building to industrial and prefabricated methods. But here I am concerned not solely with method, but with the ideas associated with building in the vernacular tradition. In this sense, vernacular is not simply situated historically (as pre-industrial) but travels alongside later, sophisticated intellectual debate and technological development as an alternative set of social and cultural values, expressed through materials and house form. Discussion about vernacular building inevitably involves a parallel one about craft as craft too embraces method and process, as well as ideology. (Walker
(1990:39) for example, discusses craft in relationship to production and to values concerning material, skill, and mental and manual labour. We will see in later chapters that self-build companies attach a great deal of importance to the concepts of craft, traditional method and notions of 'regionality' in the self-build products they promote to clients. Yet this activity occurs within a technologically sophisticated environment where the majority of building components are prefabricated and available everywhere. This apparent contradiction is not isolated to self-building but is one of the 'conditions' of contemporary society that can be seen in a range of products and practices, that can be described as revivalist and nostalgic. Neither is it isolated to the present day. Interest in vernacular forms and methods have persisted in a marginal way since the demise of traditional building methods as the dominant way of building in the 18th and 19th centuries. This section will describe the decline of vernacular building and the development of modern building methods and consider the interest of the Arts and Crafts Movement in bringing the idea of craft and vernacularism to 19th and 20th century architecture.

The decline of vernacular methods and practices and the development of 'multiple' housing units drawing upon a more utilitarian and industrial language mirrored the process of industrial revolution. A process which was itself patchy geographically, extended over a lengthy period. Indeed where urban infrastructures and housing occurred, this did not necessarily mean a complete break with vernacular methods. For example, the use of local materials for house building continued beyond the first world war.

The most marked expression of the development of industrial house building came in the form of building designed to meet the needs of industry, and to house in the most economic way possible, industrial workers. This housing was the very antithesis of vernacular building. It was high density (for example, in Leeds in 1886, the density of back-to-back dwellings was 70-80 houses per acre (Sim 1993:5)); houses within a development were usually identical in their basic

4 The erosion of 'meta-narratives' (typical of Modernist discourse – for example, of technological evolution) and the prevalence of 'plural' social and cultural conditions is described by Jean Francois-Lyotard (1984) in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.
design and laid out in grids or rows as this aided their economic and speedy erection; and much industrial house building was performed 'speculatively,' through the auspices of a patron or developer and later, through government agencies. In addition there were also elements of mass-production, of bricks, tiles and cast-iron for example. The industrial process of building, like other industrial processes, distanced 'production' from 'use' and 'consumption,' and the needs of an individual household.

The building developers of working and middle-class housing of the 18th and 19th centuries often relied on prototype or pattern book designs, that by this time, offered the architect and craftsman an extensive range of styles, plans and detailed sections to work from. *Vitruvius Britannicus* was available from the early 18th century, and by the early 19th century, Langley's *Builders Directory or Bench Mate* was advertised as 'a pocket treasury of Grecian, Roman, and Gothic Orders of Architecture made easy to the meanest Capacity, by near 500 Examples, engraved on 184 Copper Plates' (Beazley 1962: 36). Nineteenth century eclecticism, inspired by earlier grand tours, and from the rapid expansion of world trade, made building activity of all kinds exposed to any number of stylistic approaches. Clearly this was to have less impact on working and middle-class homes than on the grand homes of entrepreneurs and the aristocracy. However, coupled with the development of transport and communications, the idea that the detail and styling of a home needed to have a relationship only with local traditions and skills was consigned to history. Local knowledge, that formed the basis of vernacular traditions, was replaced with theoretical knowledge acquired through study and observation of a range of external, and largely documented sources.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, by the second half of the 19th century, had begun to express the social and aesthetic problems perceived to be the consequences of industrialisation. Of these, some were connected with workers conditions (domestic, social and work) and to the status of work, which was described in terms of its 'alienation' of the worker. The effect of industrialisation on working conditions was described by commentators Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels, but was placed within the context of the Arts and Crafts Movement by William Morris, for example in his 1884 lecture *Useful Work versus Useless Toil*
A further and related concern was the quality and appropriateness of design in relation to need and cultural context. Frequently, inappropriate models, plucked from pattern books, would be 'applied' to objects so that they became highly ornate, less functional, and culturally at odds with their intended audience. The displays at the Great Exhibition of 1851 provided ample evidence of these concerns inspiring the most vehement of contemporary critics John Ruskin to set out the virtues of correct architecture in The Stones of Venice published in 1853 (Ruskin 1960:29-39). Criticisms made about social and aesthetic problems were articulated through Arts and Crafts practice as well as through writing. The use of craft processes and a revival of interest in vernacular traditions placed the values implicit in the quality of production and materials, and of design in relation to need and expression, at the centre of Arts and Crafts philosophy. Accordingly, much Arts and Crafts domestic architecture, and later some of the housing schemes of Baillie Scott and Unwin and Parker emphasised simplicity in design as well as functionality and expression, paying attention to social as well as economic issues. Parker and Unwin in their book The Art of Building a Home (1901) suggest that:

'...the essence and life of design lies in finding that form for anything which will, with the maximum of conveniences and beauty, fit it for the particular functions it has to perform, and to adapt it to the special circumstances in which it must be placed' (Cumming and Kaplan 1991:58)

The style of Arts and Crafts buildings were extremely varied, often resulting in 'free' and eccentric design. This was power-for-the-cause and a deliberate desire on the part of practitioners not to slavishly borrow imported patterns, but to place an emphasis on national heritage, particularly mediaeval and tudor traditions, and to creatively rework and build on the vernacular. Often designs would emphasise certain features, such as the deep-hooded entrance, the buttress, low protective eaves, heavily pronounced or tall chimneys and the use of asymmetrical elevation and plan (for example in the work of CFA Voysey 1857-1941 and Edwin Lutyens 1869-1944). By using a vocabulary, even distantly related to vernacular traditions, Arts and Crafts buildings provided a 'symbolic refuge' from industrial society and urban conditions (Cumming and
Kaplan 1991: 42) and developed the language of domestic architecture in such a way as to enshrine the mythical values of 'hearth and home.'

The Arts and Crafts Movement and vernacular architecture can be seen to have some ideological connection with contemporary self-building. This is emphasised in self-build literature as improvements to 'lifestyle' and the ability to cater for distinct individual needs (bespoke design). However there are other features of self-building that place it firmly within the context of industrial and post-industrial systems. For example, some Arts and Crafts practitioners placed an emphasis on local and specialised knowledge and skills (craftsmen and architects), whereas commercial house building and contemporary self-building does not.⁶

Until the early 19th century, the building industry was largely unregulated, and it was generally the architect who was responsible for quality and standards through the co-ordination of builders and specialised crafts and trades in accordance with the needs of the client. However, with the rapid growth of building activity in the first half of the 19th century (Powell (1980: 23) suggests that this can be gauged by the number of workers employed within the industry, which grew from 203,000 in 1831 to 497,000 in 1851) the majority of building work was carried out by speculative builders relying on 'prototype' designs rather than on using the services of an architect (Beazley, 1962:35). As the industry became more regulated, the roles of builder, craftsman and architect necessarily became more discrete and specialised, and associated professions emerged like quantity surveying to secure more accurate estimates for clients. The first half of the 19th century also saw the setting up of various professional bodies to regulate and secure the quality of building activity. These included the Institute of British Architects (1834), the Institute of Civil Engineers (1818), and by the late 1830s, the Builders' Society and the London Master Builders' Association. As Powell (1980:34) has suggested, the effect of this pattern of 'professionalisation' was to make the contribution of individual craftsmen and trades more remote.

Many issues concerning the design of architectural detail that were previously the domain of skilled craftsmen, became, increasingly, the work of the professional

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⁶ With the exception of one self-build company, CB Homes, all self-build companies in the UK will manufacture to specification and deliver anywhere in the UK, local knowledge will impact in terms of planning, but not in the design or materials specification of a home.
designer. Stylistic details were decided at the outset of a project to aid the completion of estimates. In addition to the development of self-regulation was the need to improve the quality of housing at the lowest end of the social and economic spectrum. The 1848 Public Health Act is 'generally regarded as the first step in the reform of sanitary legislation and it provided for the establishment of local Boards of Heath' (Sim 1993:9). The combined effect of the industry’s own attempt to professionalise itself, and the slow but increasing role of the state in improving the standard of housing provision at the lowest end of the market, brought with it increasing standardisation towards 'universal building forms and away from local peculiarities and distinctive regional characteristics' (Powell 1980:64).

The shift from vernacular building traditions to the rapid expansion of speculative building as the way in which the majority of people in society secured their home paralleled the development of industry and the need for mass urban housing. Although this brought with it the shift away from local building knowledge and practices it also meant a far greater variety of visual treatments were available to designers and architects.

Novelty and distinctiveness in housing design flourished within wealthier segments of the market encouraged by significantly improved communications, access to materials and to a range of patterns and building styles, and the growth of wealthy middle-class patrons. Muthesius (1982:253) suggests that diversity was in many ways the product of changes in production, remarking that 'while components were more standardised, the growing number of them in total also meant much greater possibilities of combination.' In addition, the stratification of 19th century society brought with it the desire for symbols of wealth and status which 'the house of character' (Beazley 1962:67) secured. Indeed, according to Featherstone (1991:23) the idea of the 'consumption' of style, and the availability of stylistic choices, stems from this period.

There is a further aspect to the development of 19th century housing that has relevance for this study and is associated with the 'idea of home.' The Arts and Crafts Movement, and particularly its interest in domestic architecture at both grand and modest scales, as well as the growth of suburbs and of garden cities
in the early 20th century, placed great emphasis on the importance of home making and decorating. A number of books were published during the second half of the century, for example Eastlake's (1868) *Hints on Household Taste* and the 'Art at Home' series published by Macmillan which included *House Decoration* (1876), *The Drawing Room* (1877), *The Dining Room* (1878) and the *Bedroom and the Boudoir* (1878). These publications provided a wealth of 'design advice' (Ferry 2003:22) on the domestic interior and contributed to a domestic revival that called for 'individuality, and an expression of home values' (Muthesius 1982:256). Gloag (1945:152), as well as being highly critical of the 'over done' and 'ostentatious' nature of the middle-class Victorian home also remarks on the degree of comfort that was achieved:

'The majority of householders preferred comfort to fashion. They had plenty of it: deeply upholstered chairs, sofas and settees; hot and cold water; thick carpets and heavy curtains; high rooms and walls that were thick enough to be almost sound proof. Some parts of the wall were padded, for the Victorian furnisher had invented the cosy corner.'

Not only did the home allow for the expression of the individual and their status in society, the home had become a refuge, indeed a fortress, against the 'darker' and more threatening environment of the city. As Daunton (1990:211) has suggested, 'the home was in part a retreat from the stress of the world, a haven of order and security...'

The perception of home as a place of refuge was not originated by the Victorians, indeed, all dwellings exist insofar as they provide some form of protection and defence against external elements. What was particular to this period however, was the more explicit symbolic function of the middle-class home in marking a physical and ideological boundary between the domestic realm of 'home' and the urban realm of 'work' (Daunton 1990:213). In addition to the home contributing further to debates about 'gendered space,' the home also symbolised social class and cultural values. This was possible because of the development of urban centres, suburbs and later, whole new towns, generating considerable consumer choice for the middle-class household. Cumming and Kaplan (1991:64) for example, characterise the inhabitants of Letchworth garden
city in terms of their dedication 'to the simple life,' but also states that suburbs were 'expensive and inaccessible to many workers.' In this sense, what defined the status of a household was far more than the size and relative treatment of a property, but its relationship with other houses, parks, proximity to town, countryside and work. New 'structures of meaning' had emerged to reflect the more stratified nature of society.

The emphasis that has been given here to the 19th century reflects the emergence of a particular set of conditions giving rise to consumerism, and to the idea that a home can function in both symbolic and practical ways among middle-class households. The period also saw the rapid expansion of speculative house building and the shift away from vernacular traditions. The repertoire of patterns, materials and components available to designers and architects not only diversified the style of homes available to the middle-classes, but offered new meaning to vernacular buildings in terms of what they represented ideologically, adding to the already impressive 'lexicon' of 19th century style. Speculative building, and the broader function of building developers (that now managed a range of trades and crafts), also saw the emergence of a new profession – the 'designer' - capable of manipulating patterns and realising plans without the costs involved in using architects. These factors provide a crucial context for a study of self-building operating within circumstances that are particular to the 20th century, but based on social and economic structures that have their origins in the 19th century.

The Context of the Twentieth Century

Political intervention designed to protect public health as well as society against the problems associated with poor housing began with the first Public Health Act of 1875. Since then a range of legislation and guidance has been published providing Local Authorities and the building industry with minimum standards and regulations regarding the supply of housing. Policy on housing standards for example, has been articulated through Government Acts, the reports of committees and through Housing Manuals. The New Code of Model Bye-Laws (a product of the 1875 Public Health Act), although not binding, proposed that new streets had to be at least 36 feet wide, with openings every 100 yards (Sim
The intention of the Code was to create housing that offered greater circulation of air as a way to improve health conditions. The Housing of the Working-classes Act of 1890 (Sim 1993:23) gave greater powers to Local Authorities to undertake slum clearance and to purchase land for re-housing schemes. The Tudor-Walters Report published in 1918 (Burnett 1986:22) was the first to make recommendations about housing design (debating for example, the need for a parlour in working-class homes). The Report also addressed planning issues, advocating densities of no more than 12 houses per acre, the use of cul-de-sacs to reduce through traffic and road construction costs, as well as greater garden, open and communal space. Further Government Acts in 1919, 1923 and 1924 (Sim 1993:33) amended the Report's recommendations and introduced the development of public housing estates of both single homes and flatted accommodation. The 1944 Dudley Report (Sim 1993:48) into the design of dwellings was critical of much post war housing development, commenting on poor community facilities and the development of suburban sprawl which increasingly separated home from work and public facilities. Despite the guidance given to Government and Local Authorities on housing standards, the Ministry of Works introduced in 1944 the Housing (Temporary Accommodation) Act empowering Local Authorities to ignore bye-law building standards to allow for the erection of 180,000 prefabricated homes by the mid 1950s (Sim 1993:54). The combined effect of population growth, bombed out cities and scarcity of traditional building materials necessitated the need to find alternative forms of building, resulting in the many 'system built' and high rise schemes of the 1960s and 1970s. Further intervention in housing standards continued with the 1961 Parker Morris Report: Homes for Today and Tomorrow (Burnett 1986:304), which was significant in that it addressed internal design and the layout of space, but specifically recognised changes in family lifestyle, such as car and TV ownership and 'machinery' to lighten household tasks. The standards described in the Parker Morris Report became mandatory for all public sector housing in 1967 (abandoned in 1981).

Government intervention has also impacted upon planning. The 1932 Town and Country Planning Act (Ward and Hardy 1984) placed restrictions on the development of rural areas and legislated on the preservation and protection of historic and ancient sites and places of natural interest. Similarly, the 1935
Restriction of Ribbon Development Act and the 1938 London and Home Counties Act (Green Belt Scheme (Ward and Hardy 1984)) resulted in much tighter control on the use and development of land on city outskirts and in rural areas. None of these acts had much impact on developments that took place on the basis of common law and custom however, and many contingency and plot-land developments continued until the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act (Ward and Hardy 1984) which prevented further 'unplanned' development.

Clearly Government legislation can act to prevent as well as extend the provision of housing, and it can dictate the type of accommodation constructed. (For example, flatted accommodation that was encouraged by the 1956 Housing Subsidies Act (Sim 1993:73)). But it also dictates where construction can take place and the decisions delegated to Local Authorities concerning housing development. The plotland developments discussed in Ward and Hardy's 1984 study Archadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape mark the end of a tradition of self-help and self-building on marginal land. Plotland development was not dissimilar to the tradition of squatting, where claim could be made to a plot of land when a dwelling was erected on common or waste ground between the hours of sunrise and sunset and a fire lit in it. According to common law, such a person could not then be dispossessed. With the dire shortage of housing following the first world war and the glut of land on the market during the 1930s, plotlanders could buy marginal land for as little as £3.00 a plot and with it the opportunity to create a makeshift home (Ward and Hardy 1984:22). The history of plotland developments described by Ward and Hardy is intriguing and significant for a number of reasons. Not least is the political context of such developments - perceived by some authorities as a social and economic burden because of the high cost of supplying services to low density and low rateable property and the anarchic visual identity accompanying many of these developments.

Inevitably there existed a conflict between the desire to self-build and 'self-help,' and the highly professionalised and expensive procedures for development and planning that came into effect during the 19th and 20th centuries. Unless self-builders were actively involved in the building trades or were sufficiently affluent to contract the relevant trades and process planning applications, self-building in
England necessarily became a marginal activity until professional intervention occurred which mediated between the various aspects of building and planning regulation, aided by the development of building systems that lay-people could easily operate.\(^7\)

Professional interest in self-building emerged during the 1960s in response to criticisms that much public housing was failing to address the needs of communities. Part of that failure was put down to the fact that future inhabitants of housing schemes were rarely, if at all, consulted as part of the design process. Architectural and design details were resolved through avant-garde and professional notions of 'progressive' approaches to public housing, as well as the economic and planning policies of Government and Local Authorities. Many post war schemes adhered to the ideas of the Modern Movement that had been promoted by commentators such as John Gloag (1934) in Design in Modern Life, Anthony Bertram (1938) in Design and Nikolaus Pevsner (1936) in Pioneers of the Modern Movement (Greenhalgh 1990:138). Commentators attacked 'popular' architectural styles (Art Deco and 'tudor' styling) in favour of the aesthetic of the Modern Movement, perceiving the beauty of a thing as the by-product of design that 'fulfils its purpose and is honestly made' (Bertram 1937:710). Besides the rejection of popular historical styles and reference points, and traditional construction and technical processes, was the necessary need for 'pioneers' to provide exemplars of Modernist thinking and demonstrate the language of Modernism. The earlier pioneers were strongly influenced by European architects Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, including, in Britain, Maxwell Fry and Berthold Lubetkin. A further difficulty with the rhetoric of Modernism was that it placed the client (of public schemes) at some distance from professional decision-making – because decisions concerning architecture had already been made, at least in theory. The momentum for change that resulted in more 'inclusive and participatory' work in the 1960s grew from a number of pressures that affected professional attitudes to architecture. Some of these came from within the Modernist avant-garde (for example the work of Cedric Price, Peter Cook and others within the Archigram group experimented with popular iconography and debated the impact of consumerism on design form and theory, and advocated the importance of

\(^7\) One of the earliest manuals for Self-Builders was Stuart Martin's *Build Your Own Home* published in 1960.
participation in design). Others came from professional groups as well as the public, as concerns grew over the quality of construction of some 'system-built' schemes and the effect of 'clean-sweep' planning policy on local communities. The collapse of Ronan Point in 1968 and the demolition of over 10,000 dwellings built after 1970 owing to inherent building defects (Sim 1993:82) fuelled the debate over the appropriateness of modern methods of design and construction and housing ideology.

Most significant for this study, were those critics who argued vehemently for the rights of future inhabitants to have a proper level of involvement in design and architectural decision-making, and who challenged preconceived notions of the role of the architect.

Most outspoken among these is the author and architect Colin Ward, who said in 1983 (Ward 1996:23):

'We are groping both for a different aesthetic theory and for a different political theory. The missing cultural element is the aesthetic of a variable, manipulable, malleable environment: the aesthetic of loose parts. The missing political element is the politics of participation, of user control and of self-managing, self-regulating communities.'

Although Ward discusses the need for an alternative aesthetic (which is presented not so much as an issue of style, but of adaptability) he is also concerned with the politics of participation, recognising that there are social and cultural benefits to be gained from the processes of self-building.

Indeed Hughes (Hughes and Sadler 2000:183) goes further in his essay After Non-Plan: Retrenchment and Reassertion, suggesting that what characterised early opposition to Modernist strategies was recognition of the 'basic issues of self-determination, self-build and participation which were deemed to signal the bankruptcy of Modernism.'

In addition to Ward (1974, 1976, 1984, 1993) and Turner (1972, 1975), Hamdi (1991:26) also discusses self-help and public housing provision emphasising the
importance of the 'support paradigm' in terms of the equity and co-responsibility of inhabitants and facilitators in decision-making over the 'provider paradigm' that places future inhabitants in a passive role. Noble (1973:66) expresses his disillusionment with Government schemes to resolve housing shortages, suggesting a range of 'contingency' and 'self-help' models to provide starter homes for the most economically disadvantaged groups. International examples of self-help and contingency architecture were also receiving attention within British academic circles. Architectural Design carried articles on the Barriadas of Lima, Peru, written by John Turner in 1963 in which he applauded the efforts of local communities, challenging entrenched views about the necessity of planners and architects to realise successful housing schemes.

Despite the diversity of approaches, social, cultural and economic contexts of the schemes described by these authors, a number of generic factors arise from them that have relevance for a study of contemporary self-building. One is that self-building brings with it economic advantages. Grindley (1972:21) estimates savings on construction costs of between 22% and 53% enabling a broader range of economic groups to participate in home ownership, while Armor and Snell (2002:10) suggest that self-builders achieve gains in equity between 15% and 50%. A further generic factor concerns the political as well as the social and cultural importance attached to the inclusion of individual personal expression within the design process. Ward (Ward and Hardy 1984:255) suggests that one of the difficulties the authorities had with plotland development was its idiosyncratic nature, and that this wasn't simply about planning law, but a resistance to an aesthetic of non-conformity. Rapoport (1968, 1969, 1990) has written extensively on the subject of self-expression in architecture and the importance of personalisation as part of the process of appropriation. He is critical of much housing for not providing, or building in, opportunities for personalisation, restricting much of this activity to 'semi-fixed' features of properties (furniture and furnishing) rather than structural organisation and design. Self-building offers participants the opportunity to bring the personal element in housing design to all stages of the project and to reflect cultural specificity within building form as well as decoration and more comprehensively than in publicly assisted schemes. Another factor which links contemporary self-building with schemes of the 1970s concerns the training and use of skills during
the self-build process, and 'capitalising' on these as part of the project. More relevant to contemporary self-build projects are the administrative and professional skills that allow many self-builders to act as their own contractor, and as a consequence, establish themselves as the authority on their project by taking responsibility for all decisions. However, the gains described by protagonists of community self-help and self-build schemes also maintain that there are a number of trade and construction skills gained by participants that improve their employment prospects. These include the schemes undertaken by Segal in Lewisham in 1978 and by Hamdi and Wilkinson in Hackney in 1972, both of which describe building as an essentially 'social' process, in that there are non-material as well as material gains that result from self-build projects (Broome 1986:35 and Hamdi, Smith and Wilkinson 1971:573).

The importance of participatory approaches to housing design achieved some level of formal recognition by the late 1970s. A Community Architecture Group was formed inside the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in 1976 and in 1986 the first international conference on Community Architecture called Building Communities took place in London (the efforts of which were supported by the Prince of Wales). In addition, joint research by the Institute of Housing (IOH) and RIBA entitled Tenant Participation in Housing Design: A Guide for Action (1988) recommended that significant qualitative improvements in user satisfaction of housing could only be achieved when participation occurs at a fundamental level, in relation to the design and planning of housing schemes. The guide offers the agencies involved in developing housing schemes and future inhabitants of schemes a professional framework for participatory projects. Other studies, again which focus on the analysis of function and use, rather than 'provision,' were also influential. These include Darke (1984) Architects and User Requirements in Public Sector Housing and Edwards (1974) Psychology and the Built Environment. What these and other studies (Miller 1988:353-72) emphasise is that domestic architecture is as much a symbolic, social and cultural process as it is a set of technical, economic and aesthetic problems. Turner (Turner and Fichter 1972:148) rightly refers to housing 'as a verb.'

A number of public and housing association schemes began to involve end-users within the design process. Significant among these was the Byker Wall (1972-6)
development, facilitated by the architect Ralph Erskine. This scheme has received critical commentary (for example, Davies (1972) and Buchanan (1981)) because of the focus on facilitation and process, on participant involvement and a visually complex aesthetic incorporating popular architectural references (pitch roof structures) as well as traditional building materials such as red brick. Other seminal schemes include the projects mentioned above in Lewisham and Hackney. What is significant about these schemes, despite being small in scale (14 units in Lewisham and 45 units in Hackney) was the construction methods used. The method for the Lewisham project was developed by Walter Segal based on experiments in house construction that began in the early 1960s. The 'Segal Method' is based on traditional timber frame construction brought up to date by taking advantage of modern materials. His system of building simplifies each process so that it is user friendly, enabling even those with no previous building experience to build. As with mediaeval structures, the timber frame takes the structural load. Unlike conventional methods however, the frame sits on 'pad foundations' dug at ground level, which are less costly to lay and allow building to take place on uneven or steeply sloping sites. The method of construction eliminates specialist wet trades from the building process and encourages more flexible approaches to design, that are subsequently more adaptable. The speed of construction is also much faster than conventional methods, (one Segal house was built in just two weeks). Broome (1986:33) suggests that more than revising the building process to specifically facilitate self-building, Segal's houses:

'...demonstrate an appropriate vernacular for our time. It is not imposed for stylistic reasons, but uses the basic products of industry and skills that are commonly known and understood. It is essentially an updated version of medieval timber framing. But just as these houses contain echoes of a pre-industrial age, they could also be a demonstration of a post-industrial one.'

The construction method used for the Hackney project was based on a system developed by the Dutch architect, Habraken, published in his book Supports in 1961, available in the UK in 1972 (Habraken 1972:469-479). Known as PSSHAK (Primary Support System and Housing Assembly Kit), the system comprises a
shell (of around 4 or 5 dwellings) and an assembly kit which participants use to
design and erect the interior scheme for each dwelling. As with the project in
Lewisham, the intention was to operate a scheme that offered future tenants a
high level of participation in the design of their dwellings, and as a consequence,
achieve an environment more expressive of their personal needs and attitudes
(although the provision of a shell in the case of PSSHAK dictated the location of
windows, heating, stairs and standards (Parker Morris), limiting decisions about
external as well as internal layout (Low and Ravetz 1980:434)).

Both schemes recognised the importance of participation in housing design and
the use of timber frame structures and 'kits' to achieve this end. However both
schemes, despite the radicalism of their planning and building method, are not
aesthetically distinctive and would appear to conform to other publicly assisted
schemes at the time. Given that the 1960s provided a context for alternative
visual approaches (the bricolage of squatter settlements and 'Droppers' in
Colorado or the High-Tech solution of Cook's Plug-In City) it is at first surprising
that this should be the case. However the prevailing aesthetic of domestic
architecture during the second half of the 20th century confirms a retrenchment to
conservative architectural models and this would appear to impact upon early
self-build schemes as well as the later, more sophisticated systems described in
chapter three.

Hughes (Sadler and Hughes 2000:171) suggests that in addition to a British
establishment view reaching back to the 1930s, that even Modernist schemes
should be placed within an English Picturesque tradition⁸ were a number of
factors which led to a revival of historical themes in architecture by the 1970s.
Indeed Jeremiah (2000) has argued that the English tradition (described
variously, but based on the English village) is the popular aesthetic for domestic
buildings, which was only modestly influenced by Modernist thinking. In his
conclusion Jeremiah accounts for this as follows:

'The vision of a well ordered society as a model for a new Britain had
failed to take account of the vernacular traditions of British culture.

⁸ See Pevsner, Betjamin and de Cronin writing in The Architectural Review (Horton in Hughes and Sadler
2000:75)).
Rightly dismissive of an over-romanticised concept of village life, insufficient attention was given to the importance of adhoc developments, the inherent value in the scale of the English landscape and the qualitative relationship between home and landscape' (2000:211).

However debates about architecture during this period lacked the retrospective finesse of Jeremiah's arguments. Gone were critiques about the quality of housing and its distribution in favour of those based on 'style' and the right of 'ordinary' people to express their views on architecture.

The speech given by the Prince of Wales at the 150th anniversary of the RIBA in 1984 fuelled the 'style polemic' and was to give credibility to historical revivalism across social and class boundaries. Indeed the intervention of the Prince of Wales in matters concerning architectural style should be seen in the context of the Conservation Movement, which had begun with the 1967 Civic Amenities Act permitting local planning authorities to designate Conservation Areas. This, as Hughes has noted (Hughes and Sadler 2000:172) lead to the conservation of buildings and whole areas that were considered to offer historic value. By the middle of the 1980s there were over 300 such areas designated in Greater London. In his RIBA speech however, the Prince of Wales describes this interest in conserving historical buildings as a 'welcome reaction to the Modern Movement' (HRH Prince of Wales 1984). He also demonstrates his support for Community Architecture, bringing it too into a debate about housing style:

'What I believe is important about Community Architecture is that it has shown 'ordinary' people that their views are worth having; that architects and planners do not necessarily have the monopoly of knowing best about taste, style and planning, that they need not be made to feel guilty or ignorant if their natural preference is for the more 'traditional' designs — for a small garden, for courtyards, arches and porches — and that there is a growing number of architects prepared to listen and to offer imaginative ideas.'

The Prince of Wales also claimed to be speaking for the people when, in a later speech given at Mansion House in 1987, he attacked the planning system. One
of the points he raises about the system concerns aesthetic guidelines, he explains:

'...the Department for the Environment does not encourage planning authorities to set firm aesthetic guidelines in development. As things stand, they are only justified in rejecting a proposal if it is absolutely hideous; anything merely ugly must be allowed to get through. Surely we can learn from other countries?... They even spell out what bricks and tiles you must use – essential if the character of the area is to be maintained' (HRH Prince of Wales 1987).

As Jencks (1988:17) points out in his critique of the Prince's speeches, although he was at pains to stress these were his 'personal views,' the Prince became a figure-head in a debate largely about style and was to influence political judgement on such matters as planning.

Although the Prince's views were highly influential, they must not be overstated but seen within a broader context (of conservation, environmentalism and social inclusion) that gave credibility to popular (and historical) architecture – whether as part of a new development or in the context of regeneration projects. More recent policy and planning initiatives have clearly arisen from this context. Towards an Urban Renaissance: The Report of the Urban Task Force published in June 1999, gave its commitment to regeneration and improving the urban environment by proposing a range of initiatives, including the reform of planning (to provide more detailed guidance) and greater public participation in development decisions through the setting up of Local Architecture Centres. One of the more important documents to emerge from the task force's recommendations is Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing released in March 2002. This document provides local authorities with guidance on a range of issues including 'designing for quality,' 'rejecting poor design,' and 'rural housing – village expansion and infill.' The advice on design quality for new housing asks that 'Considerations of design and layout must be informed by the wider context, having regard not just to any immediate neighbouring buildings but the townscape and landscape of the wider locality.' It also states that local 'building traditions, materials and ecology should all help to determine the character and identity of a development' (PPG3: note 56). Guidance note 63 on
rejecting poor design promotes the development by local planning authorities of 'clear plan policies' and 'planning guidance including village design statements' as these provide support for developers and a reference point for planners where they need to reject an application. Reference to village design statements occurs again in note 70 on rural housing, suggesting that these 'statements' can be used to determine whether a development is sufficiently sympathetic and 'in keeping with the character of the village' to warrant planning permission.

The PPG3 also urges developers to 'think imaginatively about designs and layouts' (note 54) and create places 'which are attractive, have their own distinct identity but respect and enhance local character' (note 56).

It is difficult to object to any of these guidance notes as they appear to offer a fairly benign level of advice and require local authorities to more clearly define what is and is not acceptable. However, the tone of the guidance is overwhelmingly conservative and urges harmonisation (an important aspect of the Prince of Wales's critique), which on a practical level may result in less imaginative and more homogeneous approaches to design.

In order to understand the ramifications of aesthetic guidance at a local level, village design statements for the villages of Four Marks (2001), Beech (2002) and Medstead (2003) were obtained from the local planning authority as these statements relate directly to the case-studies discussed in chapter four.

The design statements were each formed following wide consultation with local groups and individual parishioners through the use of public fora (for example the village fete and public meetings). Each statement provides a basic topography of the area as well as details about population, economy and village history. This identifies certain vernacular traditions and the 'character' of the village as it has evolved over time. A number of visual examples are also provided of domestic buildings. In the Beech design statement for example, these are arranged chronologically and include a 12th century farm, a 13th century grange, a 17th century thatched cottage, Victorian villas and terraces, examples of the 'tin' colonial bungalow, a 60s style 'canadian cottage,' as well as recently built homes which subscribe to the themes of the statement. The 'design guidelines' follow
the visual examples offering nine key points. These include the avoidance of 'estate' developments to retain 'diversity of style and materials' and the maintenance of high standards and quality of building that secure the 'quality and diversity of design that is prevalent within the parish.' In addition, new developments or extensions should be encouraged to show innovation and be 'of their time' using up to date design and materials, be energy efficient and 'designed sympathetically' with the surroundings. They should also minimise light pollution, generally be no higher than two storey and respect the contours of the land. Further to this they should 'reflect and respect the wide range of neighbouring colours, textures, materials, shapes and styles,' provide adequate car parking and take account of designing-in safety and security.

The other two statements follow similar themes. The statement for Medstead (with the ironic title 'A Vision for the Future') is far more extensive with some 36 points and provides more specific guidance. It states for example, that housing in the central zone maintain 45+ degree pitch, slate roofs, rendering or good quality brick, with porches.' It also prescribes the materials for new houses: 'for walls: red/brown bricks, flint, smooth render; for roofs: slates, plain red/brown clay titles and small-profiled interlocking titles.'

The Four Marks statement highlights the individual quality of houses in the village and is critical of the 'run-of-the-mill properties built by the larger house builder [which] has done nothing to improve the appearance of the village and is a form of development which the parishioners would wish to see curtailed.' The statement also urges the addition of 'interest' and 'attractive features' which 'add variety' such as decorative fascias, tile hanging, render and decorative brickwork and the use of flint in walls which is a 'natural building material of Four Marks.'

The statements form the most contemporary and authoritative material on local planning matters in rural areas available to self-builders. They uphold the concerns of the Conservation Movement and those expressed by the Prince of Wales in bringing about greater aesthetic control on new developments, respecting rural and local historical traditions and the opinions of ordinary people about the quality (including aesthetic) of their environment. In particular they would appear to be concerned with maintaining the picturesque qualities of
villages and their rural aspects giving due regard to local species of trees, flora and fauna, green verges, a sense of space and the contours of the landscape (Medstead Village Design Statement 2003). In relation to house form and design, these should respect the character of buildings locally and should draw on, in some cases, a very specific range of materials.

Although planning guides are by no means a new phenomenon (Essex County Council published their own Essex Design Guide in 1973 with the aim of ‘engendering a sensitivity for local historic architecture’ (Hughes in Sadler and Hughes 2000:171), the recent appearance of village design statements will require self-builders to develop designs with local conditions in mind and in full knowledge of the aesthetic priorities of the local planning community.

The Contemporary Self-Build Industry

The development of self-build companies operating in the UK has grown rapidly over the last two decades amounting to around 30 companies today (appendix A). The proportion of new homes generated by self-building is estimated at around 25 percent of the new-build stock, around 16,000 homes a year (Armor and Snell 2002:10). This is minimal compared with activity on the Continent, where national averages vary between 40 percent and 60 percent (Duncan 1992:3). The systems used by the majority of self-build companies consist of timber frame 'kits,' a commercial extension of methods developed by Segal et al in the 1960s. They offer homeowners an extensive choice of patterns and employ sophisticated marketing and packaging techniques (these are analysed in some detail in chapter three). While the contemporary self-build company has some relationship with the self-help and the contingency housing movement (as they stress the economic benefits of self-help and the ability to 'personalise'), they are geared towards individual homeowners rather than 'communities' or state or public/private social housing provision.

Indeed it is important to consider the development of home ownership within 20th century housing history, with housing becoming an increasing valuable commodity despite the peaks and troughs in the economy and interest rates. Malpass (1990:14) for example, discusses changes in tenure this century, stating
that by the late 1980s as many as 61 percent of households were owner-occupied, compared with 42 percent in 1961 (Daunton 1990:219). In addition to the economic advantages of home ownership are the social values attached to it. Ward (Ward and Hardy 1984:18) suggests that as early as the 1920s, the idea of responsible citizenship and thrift were promoted to potential home-owners (reaching its zenith in the 1980s under the Thatcher Government's 'Right to Buy' scheme (Malpass 1990:232)). Flexible and wider access to mortgages has resulted in more diverse groups of people becoming home-owners, and this has also effected self-build projects too, with specially designed mortgages available for these projects. The idea that your house functions as an asset as well as a home is clearly not new, but for self-build projects, the return on investment offers significant advantages over conventional forms of house purchase. That self-build homes represent sound financial investment depends on the architectural treatment of the design as much as it does on the economic advantages to be had from owner participation. Brand (1997:73) suggests that buildings that present themselves as marketable assets are more likely to become 'episodically more standard, stylish and inspectable.' These issues: return on investment combined with the intention to create a home that is unique and individual yet marketable, form crucial questions for the discussion of case-studies that follows.

The act of self-building places the participant in the position of producer and consumer of a cultural (and therefore economic (Bourdieu 1992:183)) object. The form of a self-build house (and its marketability) will depend on the theoretical knowledge of participants and the degree to which consciously or sub-consciously they bring this knowledge to the project, placing their object alongside others in a cultural (and economic) hierarchy. For Bourdieu, knowledge as well as material artefacts contribute to the cultural capital of individuals. The production process of a self-build home is particularly 'postmodern' and 'post-industrial' in this respect: it is not produced through the remote (and centralised) co-ordination of a series of trades and traditional professions (perceptive thinking), but through the administrative and

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9 Using the Nationwide House Price Index, the average house price in the Outer South East saw a rise of approximately 66 percent between 1991 and 2001.

10 'Advanced Flexible Self-Build Mortgage' and 'Accelerator Self-Build Mortgage' are specialist mortgage packages for self-builders (www.selfbuildit.co.uk/finance).
management skills and theoretical knowledge (concerning taste, lifestyle, local planning) of the participant/consumer (associative thinking). Indeed at a fundamental level, this changes the meaning of the object. Baudrillard's (1996:18) revision of Marx's 'use-value' and 'exchange-value' is significant here, suggesting that in a modern economy these are rolled together into what he terms 'aesthetic-value,' placing emphasis on the symbolic role of objects within a system of signs and signifiers. The self-build home offers a unique opportunity to consider the theoretical propositions of postmodern thinking and the particular post-industrial environment where consumers are in a position to produce as well as consume.

Summary

The context of the 19th and 20th centuries reveals that self-building is connected to a number of critical themes, including practical considerations, such as housing standards and planning regulations, housing supply and demand, economic and market factors; as well as professional ones, like the development of participatory architecture. In addition to these themes are a number of theoretical considerations, such as shifts in patterns of production and consumption and in the acquisition of cultural capital. It is now the case for example, that a wider number of people can participate in self-building as a consequence of new mortgage products, the accessibility of easier and more flexible construction systems as well as support networks (both voluntary and commercial). In adopting the particular circumstances of production within self-building, the participants are themselves key agents in the production process. It is also the case that as a consequence of self-building a greater amount of the profit of building accrues directly to the participants themselves and their investment, rather than being transferred to land and property developers and building contractors. The literature that has been reviewed in this chapter and the preceding one also suggests that the process of self-building is an enriching experience providing opportunities to gain insights into the way we live and what constitutes the meaning of home. Taken together these shifts in patterns of production and consumption that bring about economic and aesthetic gains, stimulate the acquisition of cultural capital and well being.
Many of the themes described in this chapter have important ramifications for considering the nature and complexity of contemporary self-build projects. The nostalgic impulses that provoked a revival of interest in vernacular and national heritage designs for domestic buildings in the late 19th century persist today. One purpose of the analysis of commercial self-build schemes in chapter three is to develop an understanding of the popularity of traditional patterns and to explore their ‘mythical’ (Barthes 1973) associations within contemporary society. The 19th century also established the use of pattern books and a reliance on ‘theoretical’ rather than ‘empirical’ knowledge in relation to house design and form and this too has persisted to the present day. Not only in terms of the availability of pattern books and prototype designs but the number and range of building components and materials which are now as accessible to self-builders as they are to property developers. These factors necessarily encourage the consumption of style and make possible greater potential for personalisation in housing design. Personalisation had become available to the middle-class 19th century home owner, as well as the idea that the home functioned as a symbol of class and social status within an increasingly stratified society. The importance attached to a study of self-build homes lies in the fact that issues about the symbolic functioning of home, and beyond this, to the personalisation of home, can be studied ever more closely because modern systems of housing production and consumption have allowed choices to be made about the design of the home at the level of the ‘ordinary’ individual.

The analysis of case-studies in chapters four and five will take a broader interpretative view of what constitutes social and cultural value (and well being) expressed through the activity of self-building. Baudrillard’s concept ‘aesthetic value’ is highly significant for this study, integrating social, cultural and economic values (the home is a visual statement of social class and as such it reflects wider aesthetic codes concerning housing design, it adds to private capital, it is an expression of personal cultural values). The purpose of case-study analysis will be to explore the tensions that exist within these: for example, between the desire for a unique and personal object and one that will perform well economically; and to achieve a house that is different, yet one that conforms to planning policy and to certain social and cultural conventions.
The inevitable contradictions facing the self-builder cannot be unique to the practice of building your own home in the 21st century. More likely, they will relate broadly to the conditions of our time and provide fascinating insights into the way participants negotiate the issues raised here through practical work and creative intervention.
Chapter Three: Self-Build Companies

'Gradually, through my scientific work, I was able to put my fantasies and the contents of the unconscious on a solid footing. Words and paper, however, did not seem real enough to me; something more was needed. I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired. Or, to put it another way, I had to make a confession in stone. That was the beginning of the 'Tower', the house which I built for myself at Bollingen' (Carl Jung Memories, Dreams, Reflections 1995:250).

Introduction

This chapter will contribute to an understanding of a number of key questions associated with the hypothesis. One of the aims of the thesis is to develop an understanding of self-building (and well-being) within contemporary economic and social conditions. It also wishes to place the study of self-building within the context of design history and material culture by understanding more about self-building as a cultural activity and self-build houses as cultural objects. One way to gain a perspective on self-building as a social and cultural activity is to examine it within its commercial setting, through a study of self-build company literature and advertisements. This chapter will examine the messages self-build companies convey to participants about the process and 'value' of self-building, the type, size and quality of property they can expect to achieve, as well as the cost, risks and cultural and social advantages of self-building. In addition to developing an understanding of self-building in social, economic and cultural terms, the analysis of promotional material will also show the way in which participants are persuaded to self-build, reflecting either real or simulated motivating factors.

More broadly, the data and analysis derived from the publicity will support an interrogation of self-build as a cultural phenomenon, presenting and replaying to its audience the cultural values of our society as they are established by particular
institutions. This will be achieved through looking at the dominant architectural models promoted by the self-build industry.

The primary data for this section has been drawn from self-build company brochures and from advertisements for self-build companies contained within specialist magazines. Deriving the sample for conducting the analysis of self-build company brochures was generated in the following way. The total population of self-build companies was established through searches within specialist magazines (all of these have directories) and through searches on-line (for example using on-line Yellow Pages). This established a UK population of around 30 companies. Given the small size of the total population, a brochure was requested from each self-build company, with 23 brochures being received (details for these are listed in appendix A). In addition to the company brochure, ten self-build company advertisements were chosen from specialist magazines representing a range of promotional styles (highly visual to highly textual). From these primary sources a number of analyses have been made. The brochures were surveyed to develop an understanding of the type of basic services clients were offered as well as the provision of customer care services (tables 1 and 2). A further survey of word frequencies was conducted, counting words relating to concepts that have recurred within the literature review and that appear to be core to self-build activity. Further to this, semiotic analyses have been made of self-build company advertisements based on models developed by Eco (1976), Barthes (1977), Fiske (1990) and O'Toole (1994). (Analyses are contained in figures 2-11 and copies of advertisements are provided in illustrations 1-10.) The purpose of the advertisement analyses is to draw out the social, cultural and economic values associated with self-building by establishing the codes that are used to convey messages about self-building and self-build homes to particular market audiences.

There are three specialist magazines for the self-build industry, these are Built-It Magazine, Homebuilding and Renovating and Self-Build and Design. All three are widely available from newsagents, shelved at ‘hobbies’ or ‘DIY.’
The Self-Build Company

There are approximately 30 self-build companies in the UK offering specialist services and products to clients embarking on home-building projects.

The majority of these companies offer a complete package of services and products, ranging from consultancy and design services, through to the supply and manufacture of the building components for most types of project. Self-build companies offer clients the option of a complete 'turn-key' package (where the client has a very limited degree of responsibility for the project beyond setting up the initial design brief) or the selection of the elements within the package in cases where the self-builder wishes to manage some or most aspects of the project (in such cases, only the manufacture and supply of the building components may be necessary).

Given the complexity of building projects for clients without specialist knowledge of the industry, the self-build company establishes itself as the mediator of a number of disparate elements within that process, some of which are technical, others are legal and regulatory. The self-build company also provides clients with a set of assurances and reassurances, some concerning the quality and reliability of materials, including above standard performance benchmarks for running costs and thermal efficiency for example, as well as advice and information about how to manage a project.

This latter aspect is perhaps the most persuasive for clients as it removes the anxiety associated with managing a disparate range of activities, where each has particular modus operandi and fairly precise sequential relationships.¹²

A break down of the basic services that are stated in the literature of the 23 self-build companies is given in table 1. The table shows a high degree of consistency in terms of the basic services companies say they provide. The 'core' services of the self-build company are the manufacture, supply and construction of the main building

¹² This is usually associated with co-ordinating different elements of the build process, from digging out foundations, construction of frame, roofing and trade activities.
structure, which all companies provide. All but two provide design services, all but eight provide project management services and support for planning applications and compliance with building regulations. Support with plot-finding, finance and the subcontracting of builders/finishers are clearly more peripheral services.

In terms of customer care, the picture is more varied. There are a greater number of these, 'added-value,' services identified within brochures, some eleven in total, ranging from energy efficiency guarantees to assurances of 'craftsmanship finish and quality' (table 2). The four consistently noted customer care services observed in the majority of company brochures were assurances of energy efficiency (20), design flexibility (19), competitive pricing (15) and speed of construction (14). Because of the degree of consistency in the 'core' basic services offered, it is clearly within the range and type of customer care services that the self-build company locates its competitive advantage or niche in the market.

The point is also emphasised in the quality and density of many of the company brochures. The majority are full-colour, 'glossy' documents, closer to a holiday brochure than builders' merchant marketing. It is clear from the majority of brochures (23 in the survey) that they have drawn upon production values that are professional in terms of design and copywriting. Three in particular, Potton, The Swedish House Company and Maples, offer highly 'readable' documents that are more dedicated to the treatment of lifestyle than they are to technical information. Maples, for example, provides an historical overview of the timber frame tradition (a preface that reads like an introduction to an exhibition catalogue), as well as a section on 'Your Ideal Home' and 'Realising Your Dream.' There are many other devices that demonstrate the importance of lifestyle issues in the promotion of self-build activities, and many of these devices demonstrate particular social and cultural values. These devices concern the type of services offered to the customer, the choice and construction of the brochure copy, the choice and treatment of design models and exemplars, as well as standard house plans and house names.

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13 In the company brochure for Maple, a range of professional design services are credited, these include 'concept/input,' 'PR,' 'illustrations,' 'photography,' 'design and production' and 'printing.'
## Company Analysis: Customer Care

### Table 2

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<th>Company</th>
<th>Conservation guarantees</th>
<th>Energy efficiency</th>
<th>Speed of construction</th>
<th>Strength/durability</th>
<th>Acoustic performance</th>
<th>Design flexibility</th>
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**Customer Care**
The Value of Self-Building

One of the most immediate devices for communicating the 'value' of self-building can be identified in the types of customer care services offered by self-build companies (table 2). Eleven of these were identified, from measurable economic and energy efficiency values, to other, more qualitative factors concerning lifestyle and aspiration. All but three of the companies identify energy efficiency as a key gain in self-build homes, offering a potential 30-35 percent reduction on energy and heating costs.\textsuperscript{14} Other practical gains concern the strength and durability of the structure, speed of construction and competitive pricing. These gains are of a practical and functional nature. They are gains that are usually represented in clearly measurable form (such as erection time and price per square foot) so they represent important competitive factors, but they offer little value in terms of what the product can offer from a lifestyle point of view. Other, more qualitative factors are offered as key gains for self-builders. The most important of these (in all but three of the companies) is 'design flexibility,' allowing the self-builder the freedom to create their own design, or to adapt a standard design around their own particular needs.

The importance attached to flexibility and individuality in design is also demonstrated in the brochure copy, for example:

'We never build the same house twice – they are all truly unique.'\textsuperscript{15}

'We pride ourselves in being able to interpret each client's needs while working within their budget to achieve the individual home of their dreams.'\textsuperscript{16}

In addition to design flexibility, is the importance attached to other qualitative factors such as conservation guarantees, tradition, and the value placed on craft and

\textsuperscript{14} Energy savings quoted in 'Custom Homes.'
\textsuperscript{15} Quoted in 'Border Oak.'
\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in 'Fleming Homes.'
craftsmanship. The importance of these values as key qualitative gains can also be seen within the brochure copy through the following examples:

'Throughout the UK you will find examples of our craftsmanship and versatility, in homes varied in style and size to suit their environment and to meet the owners’ dreams and aspirations.'

'A Border Oak house is a statement, an expression of individuality, a refusal to accept compromise and an appreciation of traditional skills.'

In order to assess more accurately the values promoted as key gains within company literature a word frequency count was conducted on expressive concepts within brochures and other mail-out literature. This might, for example, include an introductory letter as well as the brochure. Table 3 provides details of nine concept categories, and the words within these that formed part of the count.

The word count for concept category 'bespoke, unique, custom' showed the greatest frequency and supports the customer service category 'design flexibility' (table 1). The concept category 'strength/durability' showed the smallest word count frequency, despite the fact that as a customer service category, it is a relatively common feature (over half of the brochures provide reassurances that the material they use perform above minimum industry requirements). Another example of inconsistency between the frequency of word concepts against customer service categories is that of 'craft/craftsmanship.' As a customer service category, only four companies headline this as a key feature of their service, yet in terms of word count within the text, craft concepts figure relatively highly (counted 21 times).

17 Quoted in 'Fleming Homes.'
18 Quoted in 'Border Oak.'
Brochure Analysis: Word Frequency

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressive concept</th>
<th>Number of words</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bespoke/unique/custom/individual</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dream/ideal</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental/sustainable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Craft/crafted/c'manship</td>
<td>32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional/local/vernacular</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modern/innovative/contemporary</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfort/comfortable</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durability/strength</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>
Word count frequencies provide a very clear tool for assessing the ‘values’ of self-building conveyed to customers. The textual commentary emphasises values that are only partly or incompletely alluded to in statements about the range of services (basic and customer care) that each company provides.

Some of these values deserve more detailed consideration. The most consistently and frequently expressed value is conveyed through the concept category ‘unique, bespoke, custom’ (stated on 63 occasions) where the ability to generate a home that is not replicated elsewhere is highly emphasised and is a reflection of what self-build companies perceive their customers to most value. This is intriguing for many reasons. It suggests that in Western society we place value on the individual and the unique over conformity and commonality, and that demonstrating this through ownership and property supports aspirations of social refinement and economic well-being. This is supported by Fiske (1990:81) who states that:

‘In a mass society, with mass production and mass consumption, the unique work of art acquires an additional status simply because of it’s uniqueness. It is not available for mass ownership or mass consumption and thus becomes especially valued for its ability to signal individual differences and elitist values.’

Votolato (2000:7) comments on ‘added value, representing uniqueness, status and other cultural and ideological aspirations...’ in his discussion of the contribution of craft to contemporary building. The concepts ‘unique’ and ‘craft/craftsmanship’ work in harness as it is through craft method and process that a unique outcome is guaranteed. This provides some explanation of why craft concepts should be so frequently expressed about products that are factory made.19

The craft object too, supports and embroiders aspirations of social refinement and economic well being, as the craft object is necessarily more expensive and more

19 With the exception of two specialist oak frame self-build companies, the timber for the self-build industry, as with other components, are manufactured and prefabricated.
'difficult' to produce involving both hand processes, as well as aesthetic discourse. While concepts 'unique' and 'craft' help to determine self-building as a way to achieve certain social and economic aspirations, they do not in themselves determine any particular housing style (as the unique/craft object can take on any aesthetic).

Two further concepts 'modern' and 'traditional' help determine the physical appearance of the self-build home, in ways that support the former concepts 'unique' and 'craft.' The word frequency for each concept was markedly different, with 'traditional' stated on 26 occasions, and 'modern/innovative/contemporary' on 12 occasions. (For both concepts all words were counted that stood in direct relation to the self-build product, including statements about housing style and building techniques, but were omitted in the broader context, for example, 'for convenience of modern living.' In the majority of cases the concept category 'modern' is used to describe construction systems and to express the contemporaneity of the engineering. Used to express the design value of self-build properties 'modern' was used on just six occasions.) The high level of importance given to 'traditional' is also supported by concepts 'regional/local/vernacular' in that these expressions tend to be used synonymously to refer to a style that has some historical significance, and taken together these concepts are stated on 41 occasions. The volume and range of visual exemplars of self-build homes provided within company brochures also supports the assertion that traditional or regional style properties are exclusively the choice of self-builders. There are no visual references in the brochures to contemporary or avant-garde designs, suggesting that such approaches are of marginal interest to customers, and do not adequately support or exemplify well the values implied through concepts 'unique' and 'craft.'

The concept 'traditional' is highly significant in determining the values of self-building promoted by self-build companies. Self-build homes are by necessity new homes,

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20 MacInnes, Katherine (1994) in Architectural Design vol 64 Nov/Dec states that only 6% of self-build homes employ the services of an architect.
built with new materials, using modern methods of manufacture and construction. However the 'new' and 'modern' home is emotionally problematic because 'home' has to provide reassurances of comfort, nurture, protection, warmth and security – concepts that are conveyed through the iconography of domestic buildings. Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* (1969), offers some insight into the success of certain types of dwelling in conveying a sense of 'home.' He describes the 'old house' as the ultimately 'stable' house. It is imagined to have weathered more storms in its lifetime so it is 'wiser' than both the new house and city house that has less experience of the elements. The self-build home has to suppress it's essentially modern spirit in favour of architectural patterns that have some pedigree, and implied reliability, in delivering important concepts of home. Further to the ideas developed through Bachelard's phenomenological perspective is a broader theoretical one that links nostalgic devices, such as the traditional self-build home, with postmodernism. Postmodern theory attempts to define the 'condition' of post war society against various social, political, cultural and economic contexts. The most relevant for this study are those that provide some explanation for the prevalence of conservative and traditional approaches to modern domestic architecture, but where consumer choice and participation are also seen as essential components within forms of cultural production.

The post war period marked the point at which the consumer gained status, and the demands generated by them, particularly when consumers were understood in terms of their differentiation, provided a much needed stimulus to the economy and to economic growth more generally. It was also a period when modern ideas and processes were championed among key institutions, and gained public confidence. Post war events like 'Britain Can Make It' (1946) and 'The Festival of Britain' (1951) demonstrated how this confidence was to be iterated through artistic, design and architectural language. Away from these events, public and government confidence in Modernist architectural solutions could be seen in many post war housing schemes, such as *Roehampton* (1959) and *Ronan Point* (1966). Despite the

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21 There are a minority of companies, two in the sample, 'Border Oak' and 'Crump Oakwrights' who specialise in using traditional construction techniques.
outward appearance of Modernist architectural solutions at this level, there is far less evidence of Modernist ideas becoming mainstream within the market for one-off domestic buildings, or private residential developments. Here the architectural styles ranged from tudor-bethan vernacular revivals to modest pared-down versions of otherwise fairly standard prototypes. A dilemma commented on by observers of the time including John Summerson who wrote in the 'Introduction' of the catalogue 1945-55: Ten Years of British Architecture about public housing, of a reluctance 'to be radical or stylistically positive, in preference to social, middlebrow, cosy ideas' (in Jeremiah 2000: 177).

Indeed the commercial viability of private developments necessitated the use of popular architectural codes, leaving avant-garde ideas for the public sector or privately commissioned properties. It is tempting to conclude from this, that Modernist approaches to domestic architecture in Britain were never a mainstream proposition. What did occur, however, was the adaptation and internal 'negotiation' of certain Modernist 'features' externally and within a property. Post war magazines like Practical Householder and House and Garden featured articles to help DIY enthusiasts cope with modernising conventional interiors and promoted furniture and furnishings that were 'contemporary' if not avant-garde. The development of do-it-yourself, and later, DIY outlets in the 1970s, gave householders the opportunity to take control of, and to make changes to, their property. Consumer choice could be seen operating at the level of interior design and furnishing, greatly enhanced by the availability of better quality and greater variety of materials, textures and colour.

The development of consumer choice, and the early signs of participation in household design supports the view that a postmodern society is one where consumer demand prompts market development, and where institutionalised models of good design are less persuasive or powerful. This idea is developed further by Campbell (1998:242) where he describes the 'modern consumer' as one that makes purchases based on 'want' (in addition to 'need') factors and where 'style' or a 'fashion dimension' plays a role in all product sectors. Baudrillard (1996:79) also recognises the participation of consumers in contemporary society, asserting that
'consumption is an active form of relationship (not only to objects, but also to society and the world), a mode of systematic activity and global response which founds our entire cultural system.'

The self-build industry represents a highly sophisticated development of the participation of consumers in generating architectural models, and in so doing, contributing to the development of their cultural surroundings. A development that began in the late 60s with the seminal work of Ralph Erskine, Walter Segal, Rod Hackney and others, that saw participation as an important political goal, and one that challenged the hierarchical structure of the architect/client relationship.

A number of postmodern theorists recognise these developments as signifiers of the postmodern condition. Where they are more divided, however, is in assessing the impact of consumer choice and participation in terms of the totality of the cultural form – domestic building. Some (Venturi (1966) and Jencks (1991:10)) suggest that consumer choice inevitably leads to more heterogeneous cultural outcomes as participants use the resources available to them to adapt or create from scratch environments that reflect something of their particular socio-cultural background. Others (Baudrillard 1996:14 and Jameson 1994:193) are more skeptical and critical of what this condition really offers, and whether consumer choice exists at all. The self-build industry provides an interesting case-study to explore the polemical debate outlined here. It is clear from brochures distributed by self-build companies that ‘design flexibility’ and the choice to participate and ‘take’ control of the design and build process, are promoted as key features of self-building. Whether and how participants engage with this opportunity will be tested in chapter four. The analysis of the text of self-build company brochures conducted here, shows little evidence of ‘choice’ in terms of the ‘cultural intervention’ of self-builders. Instead, self-builders are provided with the illusion of choice, the majority of which occupies a tightly defined space consisting of historical, regional and traditional architectural models.

The final expressive concept that needs consideration is that of ‘dream/ideal.’ Words in this concept category were stated on 47 occasions. The concept ‘dream/ideal’ is
perhaps the most expressive in conveying the emotive nature of home purchase/creation, whether using a self-build system or the more usual system of trading existing new/old housing stock. References to creating a dream home are found within copy generated by self-build companies, and in the statements made by participants quoted within brochures.

For example:

'We pride ourselves in being able to interpret each client's needs while working within their budget to achieve the individual home of their dreams.'22

'We sought a site with fine views and we wanted a house to look at them,' said Margaret. 'That is exactly what we have – magnificent views across miles of countryside, and a unique, 'bespoke house.' For us, this is a dream fulfilled.'23

If the 'ideal' home is one that provides a sense of place and belonging, where the occupants feel secure and protected (Lawrence 1987:48 and Rapport and Dawson 1998:236), then the domestic house should attempt to capture and symbolise these qualities. This is important if we accept that concepts of home extend beyond the domestic space, to locales, regions and even nations. Or that you can create 'a home from home' in a 'foreign' place, so long as you can create a personalised space in some way. Our language has many phrases that capture this broader meaning of home: 'home coming,' 'home-land,' 'home-sick,' 'longing for home' for example. They describe the need to feel 'rooted,' not simply to property or land, but to a cultural environment, objects and to particular people. Indeed Massey (1999) describes a contemporary conception of home as one of a 'space of flows,' rather than a 'space of places.' Indeed such a conception of home shifts the emphasis away from design aspects such as the house plan and other formal qualities to those aspects which are connected with people and relationships that 'flows through

22 Quoted in Fleming Homes.
23 Margaret Glover, quoted in Fleming Homes.
spaces.' In this way the ideal home is one that is particularised through relationships to things (the objects we are most attached to, including those that provide links to important people and events, such as photographs, heirlooms and other family 'treasures'), to the people we care most for, and to an aesthetic environment that we feel able to relate to – at least this is the ideal. The home also contains social and cultural references to personal activities that lie outside the home, including work and leisure interests. In addition to these things, the 'ideal home' will provide a lifestyle that meets with our social aspirations.

This last point is important for understanding why 'dream' should be so frequently cited in the text of company brochures, and explains the connection of this concept to others discussed previously in relation to values concerned with social and cultural aspiration.

Aspirations exist insofar as they are future propositions. We do not live in our aspirations (apart from through reverie); they are in front of us. Although this seems obvious it helps to clarify why the ideal home is perceived to be formed in dreams rather than in conscious activity. This is where we imagine the home that provides security, comfort, warmth and protection, and affords us the lifestyle that we imagine ourselves fulfilling. However, very little is known about how an individual attaches visual references to a set of values and mental-emotional concepts. Bachelard (1969:61) suggests they are formed through processes of imagination, reflection and reverie, inspired by homes in fiction and poetry. Bourdieu (1992:72) provides some explanation through the concept 'habitus.' He describes this as:

'...the strategy-generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations... a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions...'

The concrete manifestation of the dream home draws on a range of aspirational models and references, which may include fragments from homes of the aristocracy,
homes in fiction or the silver screen, homes from magazines and other popular media, homes from childhood, secure, hidden and safe places and so on. What Bourdieu describes is a system of 'integrating' empirical and theoretical knowledge, where the process of integration generates the capability to propose and engage with future scenarios and aspirations. This is a complex process and the examination of cases in chapter four will provide information about the way that self-builders undertake the process of integrating their aspirations for their home with the process of self-building.

The discussion here attempts to make causal links between concepts 'unique,' 'craft,' 'traditional' and 'regional' in defining the values associated with self-building which are purposefully promoted by self-build companies in their brochures. The active promotion of these concepts through text and image 'naturalises' them within contemporary culture generating what Barthes (1973) calls a 'myth.' The 'value' of self-building defined by self-build companies is to achieve certain social and economic aspirations, expressed through signifiers of 'refinement' (for example craftsmanship), through acquiring a 'unique' and 'individualised' object, and one that has a proven track record of performance through association with historical or regional prototypes. In addition the discussion has attempted to place the values promoted by self-build companies within the broader theoretical framework of postmodernism. The use of postmodern theory provides some explanation for the phenomenon of self-building and begins a critical debate about the true nature of the process, as one dominated by models, patterns and prototypes, where critical-cultural intervention is not overtly encouraged.

The commentary above also establishes a set of oppositional pairs that will become important analytical tools in subsequent sections. These can be identified as 'dream/conscious,' 'unique/mass-produced,' 'traditional/modern,' 'crafted/machined' and 'regional/pan-cultural.' The pairs establish a hierarchy, with the first element of the pair achieving a higher status than the second. The construction of oppositional pairs (described by Levi-Strauss in Anthropologie Structurale in 1958) proposes a system for structuring our understanding of phenomena according to a set of socio-
cultural assumptions. The derivation of oppositional pairs within this study is an attempt to develop a discourse around the nature of the dialogue between the self-build industry and their customers about their perceived housing needs and preferences in housing design.

Analysis of Visual Examples

Self-build brochures and specialist magazines contain a range of visual images of homes that act as models or exemplars for prospective self-build clients. Some are illustrative, such as those appearing in advertisements and others have a more practical function in that they describe the particular house shape, style, size and layout that can be achieved within a certain budget and plot size — a great number of these are contained within self-build company brochures. To complete this section, ten advertisements for self-build companies were selected from industry magazines and analysed using models developed for non-verbal communication, including semiology. The purpose of the section is to develop further the aims of the hypothesis by describing the cultural and stylistic precepts of self-building as they are described by the mainstream industry, as well as motivational issues, and other social gains afforded to self-building and the role of the self-build company in promoting these.

The theoretical and methodological relevance of semiotic approaches for the analysis of visual texts within this study is described earlier (in chapter one: theoretical perspectives and research methodology) and has been used extensively for the study of two- and three-dimensional objects by a number of authors including Barthes (1973), Eco (1976), Rapoport (1968,1990,1998), Fiske (1990), O'Toole (1994), Brand (1997), Baudrillard (1996), Putnam and Newton (1990) and Emmison and Smith (2000). Despite widespread use of this method however, there remains little by way of a standard methodology to frame or structure the process of generating visual analyses and few authors make explicit the process they have used. This can be explained in a practical way as the usual omission of the detailed 'process' of research within academic texts, but also because of the continuous
revision of the theory of semiology and communication studies, as well as the complexity of the subject.

However in the application of semiotic method to visual texts in this study, some explanation of key theoretical concepts are necessary, as they support the development of a systematic method and process of analysis performed here (illustrated as a basic grid in figure 1 and used in the individual analyses of advertisements in figures 2-11, and as a summary 'concept chart' in figure 12).

Each of the ten advertisements contains a rich variety of image- and word-based codes that function on two planes. Eco (1976:48) describes the relationship of the 'expressive' and 'content' plane:

'a sign has always an element of an expressive plane conventionally correlated to one (or several) elements of a content plane.'

All signs appear in some way and have substance through the message they convey (content), and the meaning and interpretation of signs is directly related to the way a sign appears and how it is represented. The expressive plane of self-build advertisements is the way in which a number of visual, typographic and linguistic devices are used to create messages about the company, its product and what it perceives customers to value. The expressive plane (figure 1) has been broken down into illustrations (drawings, photographs, plans and sketches), layout (shape, size, organisation), typography (font type, font size, logo and logo-type), copy (title, subtitle, descriptions) and colour (colour-type, tone, arrangement). Identifying how the advertisements convey messages about self-building is determined through an understanding of the interaction between the mode of expression and the substance, or content of the sign. The content plane (figure 1) describes 'what is stated' as well as 'how it is stated' to receivers of the message. The 'tone', 'accent' and 'treatment' (how) are as important as a straightforward description of what is being expressed, as it is within both these aspects of the content plane that meaning is encoded and conveyed to audiences.
A further conceptual strategy for decoding images concerns the relationship of the ‘text’ to the ‘reader’ within studies of visual communication. Barthes (1977:17) sets up two categories of signification to describe this relationship: denotation and connotation. The first of these describes a more straightforward form of communication where the relationship between the signifier and signified conforms to an established convention to create unambiguous and stable interpretation. Connotation on the other hand describes a form of communication that is less stable and more ambiguous, and where there are few established conventions for decoding a sign. Connotative readings are more prevalent within visual communication, as there are few concrete conventions to draw upon and meaning can more easily shift according to the specific context of decoding. Fiske (1990:81) suggests that:

'Aesthetic codes are harder to define simply because they are more varied, more loosely defined, and they change so rapidly. They are crucially affected by the cultural context: they allow of, or invite, considerable negotiation of meaning: aberrant decodings are the norm. They are expressive; they encompass the interior, subjective world.'

The decoding of visual examples within self-build literature will not rest solely upon decoding within the confines of semiotic analysis. The function of word-based communication, both within visual examples and brochures help to anchor meaning, and future chapters will test the interpretations made here against the testimonials of self-builders in the physical expression of actual self-build projects.

Another important concept within semiotic analysis is that of the ‘text.’ A ‘text’ represents the co-existence of many codes and sub-codes (Eco 1976:57) that offer potentially a number of sign-functions, denotative and connotative interpretations. In the context of this study, a single advertisement is a text, containing rich and highly qualitative information about the intentions of the addresser (the self-build company) as well as a number of ‘referents’ (things in the real world) that correspond to these intentions. However, the relationship between addresser and addressee or receiver is not straightforward. Eco goes on to explain:
'Every time there is a lie there is signification. Every time there is signification there is the possibility of using it in order to lie. If this is true...then semiotics has found a new threshold: between conditions of signification and conditions of truth, in other words the threshold between an intentional an extensional semantics' (1976:59).

The threshold that Eco refers to is not dissimilar to Barthes' (1973) concept of the 'myth.' Both acknowledge that the function of the sign is to represent not a 'real state of things,' but an encoded version of a 'real state of things.' This suggests that all messages are 'motivated,' but not simply in functional terms, but in ideological ways too, and that the ideology of messages may be informed at or from a number of levels, including the chief executive, the company, the sector, and the broader social and cultural environment.

The method and process of analysing self-build advertisements from specialist magazines acknowledges the conceptual strategies identified above. The first column of the grid in figure 4 refers to the 'expressive plane,' and identifies the separate elements or units of expression that form the advertisements, not dissimilar to O'Toole's (1994:87) description of 'functions.' The second column represents the content plane. This column describes the message in terms of what it says and how it is said (in terms of 'tone,' 'accent' and 'treatment'). A useful tool for describing the treatment of signs and how their meaning is conveyed is Peirce's trichotomy of the sign (in Eco 1976:195), referring to signs as symbolic (abstract), iconic (partially representational) or indexical (fully representational). In specifically noting the type of signs used, it has been possible to identify a number of visual conventions used for promoting self-building to potential customers. The third and fourth columns refer to the process of interpretation and attempts to establish the meaning of the text. The third column provides denotative interpretations, while the fourth column provides connotative interpretations and links content to emotive and expressive responses stimulated by the treatment of signs and the text as a whole. A further column has been added to provide a summary of the key concepts that are
conveyed through the processes of interpretation. These have been grouped into four 'concept categories' relating to company identity, product values, the characterisation of the client, and to company anxieties. A separate chart is provided (figure 12) giving an overview of the four concept categories derived from the analysis of all ten advertisements.

Analysis of Self-Build Advertisements

Although the use of four concept categories has proved a useful device for organising data, it must be emphasised that these categories are not strictly discrete entities, nor indeed does each company necessarily use all four categories. Each advertisement represents the company's opportunity to make a distinctive commentary about the products and services it can provide to clients, conscious of the competitive environment in which it is operating, and the need, therefore, to clearly identify a unique place in the market. In doing this, each company establishes an identity represented visually and through text-based information about the particular products and services it provides. In this way, product values are also a part of company identity, and the way a company characterises clients, is also a reflection of the way it views itself. The same can be said of 'company anxieties' - these reflect the company's own view of perceived threats, and as such contributes to the identity of the company. Despite the obvious relationship between the categories, their use helps to generate an understanding of how the advertisements convey certain propositions about self-building, and the way messages are 'layered' through a number of strategic devices.

One of the most compelling strategic devices concerns the relationship of the company to the client. In most of the examples analysed, the relationship is one of parent and child. The parental relationship is established in a number of ways. In the advertisement for Maple (illustration 1) the copy sets up the binary opposition fear/reassurance by describing the process of self-building as 'demanding,' 'exciting' and 'daunting,' but counters these with reassurances of 'help,' 'many years experience,' 'willing' and 'able to guide.' In this way the company proposes to the client the hazards of self-building but offers security and protection from these in the
form of experience, as well as the more sophisticated parenting skills of 'guidance' (over forbearance). T. J. Crump Oakwrights (illustration 2) uses a similar device, referring to 'experienced skilled craftsmen' and to a 'sympathetic design service,' emphasising again the nature of the relationship between client and company as one that offers security but at the same time allowing clients the opportunity to express themselves. It is often with images that the most powerful messages are conveyed however, and the example given in the advertisement for Potton (illustration 3) captures the full semiotic power of the image. The main image occupying the central space of the advertisement is (unusually) of an interior - the guest room. The image 'fades' to the top and right and features a girl asleep on a traditional chaise-long. A golden Labrador rests at the foot of the chaise-long; cushions, story books and the headdress of her costume are scattered around. Here the parental function of the company is symbolised through the protection of the innocence of a sleeping child - a powerful narrative device conveying abstract notions of security and protection. It is also significant that the Potton image makes reference to 'Victorian' styling. The girls costume, the ornaments and furniture refer to this period and the mythical notion that the 19th century middle-class home provided a haven of comfort and security against the threat of the city, and industrialisation.

The strategic 'parental' device as we have seen, is supported by associated concepts 'security' and 'protection.' Other associated concepts also support this idea. Gaining the confidence of the self-builder is key to them becoming a future client and to do this the self-build company needs to display 'authority' and 'assertiveness.' This is achieved in a number of ways. In the advertisement for T. J. Crump Oakwrights (illustration 2), for example, the majority of copy is in uppercase, and structured through the use of bullet points. Generally there is a controlled use of type style and size. Within the semiotic of typography, uppercase text is connotative of a more authoritative 'voice' than lowercase. In this advertisement, the authoritative and powerful voice of uppercase text has been softened by the use of a serif font. This keeps in check the difference between an authoritative communication, and one that is aggressive. The advertisement for SBHC (illustration 4) uses a tightly structured hierarchy of information. A large, bold
strapline tops the page mirrored at the bottom of the page with the company's contact details. A vertical column of text separates them. The symmetry of the page design and the hierarchial structuring of information conveys a sense of authority, but at the same time provides a 'frame' and protective environment for the image of home placed in the centre of the advertisement.

Another way that the authority of the company is conveyed is through reference to established techniques and practices. The advertisement for Alpine (illustration 5), by its very name, references a 'wood tradition,' and a building style (the Alpine Chalet) that is effective in particularly cold and snowy conditions. The idea that a technique is tried and tested, that it is established through tradition, confers onto the company, a certain degree of trust and authority. Demonstrating authority through a sense of historical pedigree and tradition is also achieved through the company logotype. Both Fleming (illustration 6) and Maple (illustration 1), use the language of classical architecture to denote 'power,' 'authority' and 'presence' seeking to transfer these qualities onto company identity. For Maple this is achieved through an illustration of the facade of a classical building, and Fleming, the use of classical columns - both are iconic signs for classical architecture, and the authority it has commanded in Western architectural history.

Another key feature of the relationship between company and client is the need to provide reassurances of the professional status of the company and its products. Without professionalism, it would be impossible for clients to place their trust in a company. Professionalism is conveyed through a number of associated concepts. One of these is the idea of 'qualification.' Self-build companies frequently state that they have several years experience in their field (25 years in the case of Border Oak, illustration 7, 31 years in the case of Design and Materials, Illustration 8, and 'many years' experience in the case of Maple, illustration 1), or, as noted above, provide a 'traditional' product that is 'time-proven' (Border Oak). Another way professionalism is demonstrated is through explicit reference to the quality of the company's products. Fleming (illustration 6) refers to 'assurance of quality' and includes, as others do, a quality standards number and kitemark. Taylor Lane (illustration 9) sites
the name of the architect featured within the advertisement. Here the professionalism of the company is conferred in a less direct, but readily conceivable way - through the professional status afforded to architects. Many companies are equally keen to establish the idea of professionalism through other devices however. A number of the advertisements, for example Taylor Lane (illustration 9), Heritage Designs (illustration 10), Design and Materials (illustration 8) and Fleming (illustration 6), speak directly and informally to clients using the second person 'you' and 'your,' and by having a 'no nonsense' quality to the design language. They also tend to stress the more quantitative gains in using their services such as 'free planning' (Heritage Designs), 'energy saving' (Taylor Lane) and factors affecting 'site' and 'budget' (Fleming). For these companies, professionalism is conferred to the company identity through the appearance of a concern for honesty and integrity, particularly through price promises and other cost saving factors.

The desire to establish a company identity based on professionalism is contrasted, at times starkly and in contradictory ways, with the characterisation of the client. Often the client is perceived as emotional and unconscious (dreaming), while the self-build company is assertive, professional and capable. The juxtaposition is a necessary one (although would find little support from those participants that have completed a project). If clients were afforded the belief that they could manage a self-build project without the protection, authority and professionalism of the self-build company, then self-build companies would soon be out of business. In the advertisement for Maple (illustration 1), the client is described as 'daunted,' requiring the skills of a 'design team' to 'help realise' their 'dreams.' T. J. Crump Oakwright (illustration 2) 'sympathises' with clients while Heritage Designs (illustration 10) offers clients the 'chance' to own the home of their dreams. The characterisation of the client's emotions is extended more powerfully and is sentimentalised through the images evoking home. SBHC (illustration 4), Potton (illustration 3), Alpine (illustration 5) and Border Oak (illustration 7) use a number of graphic devices to heighten the emotive and sentimental qualities of their advertisements. The hand drawn illustrations in three of the examples offer an 'artists impression' of the company's products. Because these are not 'real' homes, the illustrations provide
the conceptual 'gap' for the imagination to play out what it might imagine the home to be, or more simply, the feelings that are evoked by them. In the illustration for SBHC a plume of smoke bellows from the chimney. We are led to imagine the fire burning inside, and the sense of warmth and homeliness that a real fire conveys. The illustration for Border Oak appears as if it was generated by a traditional engraving or printed technique. This emphasises the 'craft' character of the product but also evokes the idea of the old rural house, one that is better at being homely through centuries of experience. The illustration for Alpine has the quality of picture book illustration. The colours are far brighter than would normally be the case for an image that is intended to be purely representational. The small leaded-light windows, the rural setting and the gay colours provide powerful nostalgic impulses of the quaint home of children's literature. The Potton image has a different approach, but nevertheless sentimentalises the idea of building your own home. The use of 'fading' for the main image is a device often associated with romantic portraits, wedding photographs, and sentimental images of pets and small children. Here the device has a similar function - in that it is being used to 'soften' the overly representational quality of the photographic imagery, and is in keeping with the sentimental subject matter of the image. In film, fade devices are often denotative of awakening from or submergence into dream or sleep. The device supports the idea of the sleeping or dreaming child, and by extension, the idea that self-build homes are the product of dreams.

In addition to the often sentimental and emotional portrayal of the self-build home, importance is also attached to design flexibility and the ability to individualise the self-build home. Some companies achieve this by providing photographic examples: Maple (illustration 1) describes the bespoke nature of their products through the exemplar featured within the advertisement. Drawing on a range of 'traditional' themes, the house combines elements of 'new England,' 'classical' and 'medieval' style. Design and Materials (illustration 8) expresses design flexibility by providing a range of examples, five in total showing a variety of treatments, styles and materials available to clients. Potton (illustration 3) uses a similar device, with three 'insert'
photographs and a further image at the top of the page, emphasising a choice of schemes.

The ability of a company to work with a client to achieve something that is unique to them, is also expressed through strapline statements and advertisement copy. SBHC (illustration 4) allows clients to 'pick features' or 'start from scratch.' Design and Materials (illustration 8) offer products 'designed exactly to suit your site,' and similarly Heritage Designs (illustration 10) offer 'kits designed to suit your specification.' Perhaps more potent than this however, is the claim by some companies that they can turn the 'dreams' of clients into 'reality' (Maple, Potton, Fleming) and by doing this, secure the unique value of a home to particular, individual needs and lifestyle.

The retailing of 'lifestyle' within self-build company advertisements is the second key strategic device to emerge from the analysis of advertisements. As with the first, the relationship of the company to the client, there are a series of associated themes and concepts, which link each of the four concept categories given in figure 12.

The key question here concerns whether particular lifestyle qualities are promoted above others, and whether this can be defined further in terms of a set of visual characteristics and a particular ideology of home.

The importance of the 'individual' in determining a lifestyle of their 'own' has already been alluded to in the previous section and earlier in the chapter there has been some discussion about the centrality of the individual in Western society. However, the idea that self-builders have unlimited 'choice' and through the selection of site, materials and design can achieve homes that are expressive of themselves, does not appear to be played out within the narrative of self-build advertisements. A number of 'key concepts' occur with a high level of frequency and consistency (figures 2-11) that provide clues about the ideology of home, and the visual characteristics attached to this and promoted by self-build companies.
The first of these is the idea of 'tradition' or 'heritage.' Although these have different meanings, in the context of self-build advertisements they are used synonymously to refer to the value attached to processes, techniques or designs that have stood the test of time, either through their ability to endure time (including conservation), or by their stylistic popularity over time. The idea of heritage is often alluded to by reference to building style. For example Maple (illustration 1) uses classical revival themes within its logo and in the architectural details captured in the photographs. Others, like T. J. Crump Oakwrights (illustration 2) and Border Oak (illustration 7), show structures dating back to the 15th or 16th century. Others are less specific architecturally, yet include historical reference points, for example, half-timbering (Alpine, Potton, and Design and Materials), small or leaded window lights (T. J. Crump Oakwrights, Alpine, Potton, SBHC, Design and Materials, and Fleming), or traditional stone or brick details (Maple, Alpine, SBHC and Fleming). Potton embraces both tradition and nostalgia through reference to a 'Victorian' styled interior. In fact only two of the ten advertisements included in the analysis do not make explicit reference to historical style. Of these, Heritage Designs (Illustration 10) clearly alludes to the 'value' of historical buildings through its choice of company name (the photographs in their advertisement shows a house in various stages of construction, making its stylistic reference points difficult to determine). Taylor Lane is the only company to feature a house that does not allude to historical revival themes (and it cites the name of the architect to confirm its contemporary status).

The idea of tradition is also emphasised within advertisement copy, and this is particularly so for the companies specialising in oak frame structures. Here tradition is related to technique as well as building style, which is further supported by reference to the use of 'craft' (Border Oak) or 'skilled craftsmen' (T. J. Crump Oakwrights). (It is interesting to note, that only one company, Border Oak, references the regional context and 'vernacular tradition' of their product - in all other cases the choice of style is related to individual preference, not locale.) Tradition is also highlighted through the range of materials used: clap-boarding, brick, stone, cement render, tiles, as well as the type of window and roof materials used.
Generally these remain firmly within the vocabulary of at least conventional, if not traditional building materials.

Only one 'specialist' company, Border Oak (illustration 7), claim to 'construct authentic oak framed structures,' linking the idea of tradition and craft to a product that conforms in precise terms to the processes, methods and materials used in a particular region and period in time.

It would be wrong to assume, however, that self-build companies have no concern for modern or contemporary ideas. However with the exception of Taylor Lane, the remit of modern or contemporary ideas is confined to living 'standards,' rather than the design of a house. Border Oak, the company with the most 'traditional' product, asserts the relevance of their product 'to the needs of the 21st Century,' somewhat defensively. Others provide less precise connotations of the importance of modern ideas and standards but evoke these through the graphic treatment of their advertisements: for example the 'swoosh' logotype for Potton (illustration 3) and 'computer icon' logotype for SBHC (illustration 4) contain technological 'inferences.'

In addition to notions of tradition and heritage, and the careful containment of modern themes, other associated concepts 'rural' and 'rusticated' appear dominant within advertisements for self-build companies.

In the majority of cases, homes featured in self-build advertisements are large, detached properties, set in mature plots and most are assumed to be located in rural settings (Alpine, Border Oak, Potton, Maple, SBHC, Taylor Lane, Design and Materials and Fleming). Only in the advertisement for Heritage Designs (illustration 10) are other properties visible with the frame of the photograph. None of the advertisements show 'town' or 'estate' properties, or properties in an urban setting. Although it may be a feature of the self-building industry, that the majority of plots and self-build projects are located within rural settings,\(^\text{24}\) this is not exclusively the

\(^{24}\) Self-Build magazines contain 'plot search' sections. The majority of plots appear to be rural and semi-rural locations with a minority of re-development plots available in urban locations.
case. A number of articles in self-build magazines feature urban projects and projects that demonstrate an interest in contemporary design. The association of self-building with rural settings and with nature is also supported by attempts to 'rusticate' the image of self-building. The use of 'hand drawn' illustrations for Alpine, Border Oak, and T. J. Crump Oakwrights serves to render the image of home in a non-mechanical way, in an attempt to emphasise the rural character and 'charm' of these properties.

The interplay between associated concepts strengthens the totality of what might be termed the ideology of home (as represented by the self-build industry). This it would appear, is rooted in the idea that 'old' styles and traditional processes offer something of value or meaning over modern and technologically driven solutions. Often there is more than a suggestion that these homes contain some element of craft process, and this too heightens their status as cultural artifacts, and the idea that they have quality and uniqueness built-in to them. The rural setting is also important. It generates a sensation of 'quality of life' (often conceived romantically) as an environment that is cleaner, more healthy, a place of reverie and relaxation, the antithesis of the conception of modern, urban, city life. The connection between these values and 'lifestyle' is firmly made: the images themselves are of substantial, prestigious properties, and in some instances (Potton and Fleming) direct reference is made to 'lifestyle' in the text.

Summary

The role of the self-build company is quite evidently wider than the provision of services and components to self-builders. It provides a set of reassurances, for what is still, in the UK, a fairly unusual way of securing a home. The majority of self-build companies use timber frame methods of construction as these offer a cost effective and efficient means of construction, where the components can be

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25 For example, in the July 2002 issue of Build-It Magazine, a contemporary steel and glass house in London is featured pp10-18, and a further contemporary design is featured on pp45-56.

26 Self-building contributes around 8 percent of new housing provision in the UK (Armor and Snell 2002:10)
manufactured off site, reducing the reliance on local building trades. Some companies draw upon 'authentic' techniques such as those promoted by T. J. Crump Oakwrights and Border Oak, although the majority use components that are factory made. Despite the fact that the timber frame method of building is one of the oldest forms of building, used in the construction of Anglo-Saxon houses, in the UK today it operates almost entirely within the self-build industry and therefore requires some explanation to potential self-builders. The company brochure and to a very small extent, the self-build advertisement act as an information tool. Not only do they explain the timber frame method of construction, they provide reassurances about the performance and quality of company products, mindful that most self-builders will only have had experience living in conventional brick/or block built homes. In addition to providing information, the self-build company uses the brochure and the advertisement to 'position' their company in relation to others and to compete for business. Positioning factors take on a number of guises. It has been noted earlier, for example, that the range of 'basic' services is fairly consistent between companies, but 'added-value' or 'customer care' services are more varied, and tend to express qualitative factors, such as 'craftsmanship.' The manner of presentation is also varied. It has also been noted earlier that the quality of some of the brochures (for example Maple), and the sophistication of some of the advertisements (for example Potton) demonstrate an understanding of print quality allied with visual and textual narratives about lifestyle, supporting the view that self-build companies perform ideological as well as practical roles.

Self-build companies portray a very particular image of the self-build home: taken together, the word count analysis performed on brochures and the visual analysis performed on self-build advertisements, they are overwhelmingly pre-occupied with historical models and revival themes (anywhere between the 15th and 19th centuries). Other associated concepts have been shown to sit closely along side these, notably the idea of the rural setting and the 'unique,' 'individual' or 'bespoke' home.

27 Two companies out of approximately 30 in the UK use systems other than timber frame. Design and Materials use conventional masonry construction and Newhaus use the 'blockfast' system.
The image of home presented by self-build companies may provide some explanation as to the 'motivating' factors behind self-build projects. And this chapter has attempted to make a causal link between concepts 'craft,' 'unique,' 'traditional,' and 'rural' for example, and aspirational and lifestyle values that are presumed to exist in the market. It has been shown, for example, that in Western society the 'unique' object has higher status and material value than the mass-produced one, and that rural living, (although romanticised) is associated with a better standard and quality of living than that enjoyed within an urban context. The link between these concepts and historical architectural models is clearly driven by popular taste (discussed by Jeremiah (2000)), but as a cultural phenomena it must be explained philosophically, socially and culturally. It has been revealed, for example, that the 'idea' of home, or indeed the 'ideal' home, is formed in the imagination, and that the sensory and visual basis of the design may draw upon a very wide range of experiences and resources that are personally and culturally located. The preference for the 'old' home, one that is designed around conventional notions of security, comfort and shelter, may provide one provocative source of reference. Another, the grand or luxurious home, not only provides a model of comfortable living, but has popularised the use of 'important' architectural styles. Despite the persistence and popularity of historical models within an area of building activity that encourages choice, flexibility and individuality does not diminish the view of some postmodern theorists (particularly Frampton (1985:16-26) in his argument for a critical regionalism) that there is a real paucity of engagement in what constitutes relevant contemporary cultural forms, and the relationship of these to social groups and their environment. It would be inappropriate to lay the blame for this at the door of self-build companies, for they reflect as well as participate in the ideological landscape of domestic building activity - and it is has rarely been the place of commerce to challenge such issues. Instead the issues identified here need testing in the context of actual self-build projects and the values that self-builders ascribe to the process and outcomes of self-building. Indeed it is within this context and the consideration of self-building in relation to well being that issues concerning built form can be weighed against other aspect of self-building, such as participation in
creative and building processes. The material in this chapter has supported an understanding of the self-build phenomena within a cultural (and design historical) context describing it as a particularly postmodern activity. It has also described the language of the self-build home and the associated values ascribed to self-building within mainstream commercial practice. In doing so it is possible to show, from the perspective of the commercial self-build company, what self-building may contribute to well being. Referring to what has been described as the attributes of serious amateur activity - the notion of a process leading to significant 'achievement' – it is clear that the self-build company describes this as the realisation of a 'dream' home. This is a home that leads to an improvement in lifestyle: the house is better ‘fitted’ to the needs of participants and is of high quality (for example, it has high standards of insulation, it is the product of a professional company, the product is engineered to modern standards). Improvement in lifestyle is also achieved through the provision of a more secure and comfortable home and one that has a more 'ideal' location. A further attribute of serious amateur activity concerns the need for it to be challenging (and as such having the capacity to be developmental). Company literature certainly communicates this as a feature of self-building – describing it as 'demanding, exciting,' even 'daunting.' Participation and creativity are also associated with activities that bring with them personal reward and well being. Company literature places great emphasis on the participative nature of self-building (although in most cases this is restricted to the design process). Design flexibility and the opportunity to create a ‘bespoke’ home is considered to be the principal selling feature of self-build products. The combined effect of user participation in the design process and the adaptability of company products supports the idea that self-building can achieve an ideal home (one that carries the unique signature of the self-builder but drawing upon historical patterns as providers of reassurance, quality and marketability).

The extent to which these assertions map onto the actual experiences of self-builders (who may or may not have referred to commercial literature, or used a 'package' service) will be considered in chapter four and the discussion of the outcomes of research in chapter five.
Maple for good design

Maple Timber Frame

Let our design team help you realise your dreams

Building your new home is a demanding and exciting project, but if you involve Maple Timber Frame right from the very beginning it need not be a daunting one.

Maple Timber Frame have vast experience of designing and building timber-frame homes, and are willing and able to guide you boldly through your project.

Maple Timber Frame of Lingby
Unit 29, Progress Business Park
Ormes Lane, Kirkham, Preston PR4 2TZ
Tel: 01772 603376 Fax: 01772 603060
email: maple@lansley.co.uk

Maple: Self-Build and Design Oct 2001
Illustration 6

A home to fit YOUR SITE, YOUR BUDGET.
~your life

FLEMING HOMES

- A Fleming Home to relate your needs
- As individual as you are - and you will get all the
- Professional assistance, expertise and experience to
- Turn your dreams plans and ideas into a practical reality.
- Fleming Homes provide a very personal service which is
- Flexible to your specific needs, and a high standard is backed up

the assurance of quality service - EST 1961

Fleming Homes Limited
31 Water Street, Dunoon, Argyllshire.
DD11 1BB, Scotland
T: (01369) 883788
www.fleminghomes.com

Incorporated Society Credit

Fleming: Self-Build and Design Oct 2001
Exceptional Energy Saving Homes

TAYLOR LANE
TAYLOR LANE TIMBER FRAME LIMITED
Chapel Road, Rockingham Industrial Estate, Kilmarnock KA2 8LD
Tel: 01443 217012 • Fax: 01443 217043 • e-mail: sales@taylor-lane.co.uk • website: www.taylor-lane.co.uk

Taylor Lane: Build-It Magazine January 2002

Heritage Designs: Self-Build and Design July 2002
Chapter Four: Case-Studies

Not only the house, but the garden as well. Something we discovered was that even though we didn't set out for it to be anything special, it ended up a lot better. I feel a sense of achievement when I say it. It's not that it was more expensive, it just...it just worked. It's better. It's more...happy' (Interview with Jonathan, 2002).

Introduction

The case-study material presented in this chapter includes discussions of self-built projects on the house of a couple who have lived in their self-built project for a number of years. The design process and rationale behind the design decisions of the couple are discussed, along with the aesthetic decisions of the architect. The project is then examined in the context of the promotional literature of self-build developers, and the social, cultural, and financial aspects of self-build are also considered. This chapter explores the degree to which self-build is influenced by the choice of design and aesthetic features.

Heritage Designs: Self-Build and Design July 2002
'Not only the house, but the grounds, everything has gone far better than I ever hoped. It's all knitted together, it's a job for most people to stand back and say why did you do that instead of that. Most people say I think you've done it dead right, and it all seems to work. You know, I didn't set out for it to be as good as it ended up. It appears to have ended up a lot better... even though it's small, it's one bedroom, it's cold, it's damp, it's kind of dark, you know, I'm very, very happy, I'm really happy' (Interview with Gordon McKenna, 2002).

Introduction

The case-study material contained in this chapter forms the backbone of the inquiry into self-building. The reality of building a home is described through the experiences of six participants who built their homes between 1976 and 2002. This empirical material will be compared and contrasted with the findings from earlier chapters that have attempted to understand self-building from the point of view of self-build companies and as part of the recent social and cultural context of housing.

A number of research questions will be addressed during the chapter. These include the motivation to self-build and an assessment of the 'achievement' of self-build projects (in terms of a capacity to stimulate well-being), relative to individual drivers. It will also examine the way participants engage with the design process and negotiate with others, the complex regulatory, planning and aesthetic decisions of self-building. Previous chapters have examined the promotional literature of self-build companies and have attempted to provide a social, cultural and theoretical explanation for self-building. This chapter will explore the degree to which personal expression, social and cultural factors impact on self-building, contributing to the sense of the 'uniqueness' of each project. While not denying the place of individual expression, the chapter will lead to a discussion about how self-building reflects broader contemporary themes about the notion of the home in modern Western society.
The chapter provides a brief explanation of the 'exploratory cases' conducted in 1997/8, as well as an explanation of the way data for the case-studies for the thesis was collected and coded. The chapter will provide a profile of each participant and their project and it will analyse the case-study material according to a number of themes derived from the coding process.

Exploratory Cases

During 1997/8 four case-studies were conducted as an exploratory exercise to test the viability of the subject for PhD study. The case-studies were generated using a local newspaper, the Lincolnshire Echo, which carried a letter requesting interest from local self-build participants.

Twenty-two responses were received from which four were followed up for case-study. Many of the initial respondents were unwilling to take part in a recorded interview, while others were discounted on the basis that they represented very similar profiles (where the self-build project was undertaken during the 1950/60s following which the respondents had had many subsequent property moves.) The cases selected for interview included Baigent (completed in 1996 using a timber frame self-build package); Johnson (completed in 1965 using 'planahome' specifications); Scarborough (completed in 1968 using his own design); and Smith (began in 1998 using a timber frame self-build package). The range of projects in terms of scale and method was sufficient to test the authenticity of the inquiry and to validate the initial hypothesis that design decisions are taken by participants in self-build projects and that these are based on a combination of personal and external factors and contribute to a sense of personal satisfaction.

Each case-study took the form of a recorded interview using a 'prompt-sheet' to guide the interview and to maintain levels of consistency between them. Interviews were between one and two hours duration, were usually informal and conversational, and interspersed with references to photographs, sketches and plans. Interviews were later transcribed.
The structure of the interview was set around four stages. The first stage 'pre-build' was an attempt to identify the profile (socio-economically) of the respondents and to establish their motivation for self-building. It was also the opportunity to gather information about the 'conceptual image' of the home, design problems and design decisions prior to the building process taking place. While effective as a tool to begin the interview process and to establish important lifestyle issues, the gathering of key data for the purpose of reporting back the profile of participants, would have been improved in terms of accuracy and consistency if respondents had completed a proforma prior to the interview. This would also have provided more time for the more 'difficult,' and central issues of home image and concept to be established. Despite the need to extend this aspect of the interview, respondents were highly vocal about design issues and were willing to reference the visual material used for establishing the design of their home. For example, Johnson referred to the artist's impression of the 'plan-a-home' bungalow and clearly articulated her desire for a 'contemporary style' home, identifying the importance of the 'chimney' and the fact that 'they were all about level', and 'the low pitched roof with stone'.

The structuring of the interview around four stages was in recognition of the sequential process of self-building. The second stage of the interview gathered data about the extent of participation in the build process. This section was intended to establish links between the 'action' of participants and their on-going 'appropriation' of the home. It was revealed however, that participation included administration, co-ordination and management as well as construction processes and that the balance between these activities varied between cases. The third stage of the interview process addressed 'habitation and occupancy' and considered how important these processes were in the realisation of the identity of home. This section also identified where decoration and furnishing was used to ameliorate shortcomings in the design of the home or to achieve a set of values that were not expressed through the structural or exterior design. However it was clear that to undertake a detailed analysis of 'finishings and furnishings' would distract attention away from the process of designing and building a home to one that considered the more portable and 'semi-fixed' (Rapoport 1990: 89) aspects of interior decoration. The process of conducting
exploratory cases confirmed the need to focus the study on the process of designing the structure, and to the ways participants may have used finishing processes to enhance their original design objectives.

The final stage of the interview for the exploratory cases took the form of a 'post-occupancy evaluation' requiring participants to shift from a process of subjective reflection to one that is primarily objective. For cases Johnson and Scarborough, the period between completion and interview was too great to make any sense of the six weeks to two years structure of the evaluation. Both participants were evaluative however, but their evaluation was made more complex by having to consider their home against the ideas that informed their design 30 years ago. Both Scarborough and Johnson tended to refer to the positive nature of the achievement of the project, rather than the effectiveness of the design. Both cases referred to re-sale as proof and measure of their achievement (on economic grounds, but also as confirmation that what they had achieved was a home of a 'professional' standard and specification). Baigent on the other hand, completed the project far more recently and was still living in the accommodation she and her husband built. Baigent's evaluation identified two specific points of slippage between her image of the home, its concept and subsequent realisation. The 'entrance hall' and 'sweeping staircase' were specific elements of the vocabulary that made up the image of what it would be like to live in this home. They were self-consciously intended for the experience of the visitor to the home, yet fell short of their intended grandeur. As elements within the overall scheme of the home, they had been successfully achieved, but their 'effect' within the context of the plot size and scale of project was more difficult to perceive during the design process. Our discussion about why she thought this had occurred identified a number of issues that became important for later cases. One concerns the accessibility of the 'total design concept' within self-build projects as it depends on the ability of participants to 'read' technical information and even if this is accomplished it provides little assistance for understanding the home experientially. The total design concept is also hidden from view owing to the absence of certain data, for example the effect of light and colour, and the effect of furnishing and household clutter. Another important issue concerns the totality of the image of home. The exploratory cases revealed the delicate and
fragmentary nature of home image and identity and its capacity to shift over time. Indeed it became apparent that images of home do not have a totality and remain elusive even to the conscious attempts of the self-builder to make into a physical reality a range of emotional and cultural values.

The use of exploratory cases identified a number of thematic and methodological issues for the development of case-studies for the thesis. Thematic issues concerned the restriction of the inquiry to the self-build process rather than an expanded inquiry into the more general theme of interior decoration and a consideration of 'taste', of which there are many existing studies (for example Barker and Parr (1992) Signs of the Times: A Portrait of the Nation's Tastes). The method of conducting case-studies was also brought into focus. Particularly the quantity and density of data generated by a small number of cases and the difficulties this presented for detailed analysis. The exploratory cases also demonstrated the need to gather data concerning participant profile in a more structured format and the need to provide participants with an outline of the interview prior to the meeting taking place so that some preparation could be undertaken before the interview. The interview process was also reviewed in light of the exploratory cases to include more devices to 'prompt' thinking on the conceptual nature of the design and to exclude the formal and staged (six months and two years) post occupancy evaluation in favour of a more discursive reflection on the achievement of the project.

More fundamentally, the exploratory cases demonstrated the need to shape a firmer understanding of the different roles of case-study research within qualitative studies and the particular role they would perform within this study. Chapter one discusses literature concerning approaches to case-study research confirming the appropriateness of using 'collective' rather than 'singular' or 'instrumental' approaches. However in reaching the view that it would be the purpose of a set of cases to show individual distinctions as well as lend an understanding of the population as a whole, it became necessary to show the typicality of the cases used for the study against the profile of self-builders nationally. Such an analysis would support the process of explaining certain
distinctions between cases as well as offering legitimate grounds for making theorisations about the nature of self-building among all typical cases.

Data Collection

The intention of data collection was to establish a set of cases that demonstrated different approaches to the self-build process but that were broadly typical of national self-building practices. The exploratory cases showed that a small number of cases offered a very large quantity of qualitative data and that to secure any detailed analysis of the data the study should consider fewer than ten cases. Further to this it was the intention to explore in some depth the experiences of a geographic cluster as regional data concerning land and housing prices could provide common motivating factors.

Letters were placed in five local newspapers and the Association of Self-Builders distributed a letter by email to self-builders registered with them in the Southern and South East region. Six respondents came forward as a consequence of the letters placed in three of the local papers: the Petersfield Herald, Alton Herald and Farnham Herald. One respondent was rejected (as the project was concerned with the conservation of an existing dwelling rather than self-build), the other five had completed projects appropriate to the study and agreed to participate. One participant subsequently referred me to a further case study giving a total of six (table 4). Five of the six participants had built homes within a tight geographic cluster, within a 10 mile radius of Alton, Hampshire, the remaining one (McKenna), was a self-build project within a mile of the towns of Farnham and Aldershot, on the Surrey/Hampshire border. A map is provided giving the location of each project (table 5).

Participants were required to complete a form capturing basic details about themselves and their project (Pre-Interview Form, appendix D) and were invited to take part in a one-to-two hour interview (the structure and key headings for the interview were posted to participants in advance (Interview Structure, appendix D). Participants were notified that the interview would be recorded (transcripts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Murrell</th>
<th>40-45</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>15/11/2002</th>
<th>white</th>
<th>M+F</th>
<th>Electronic Sales/Lecturer</th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>M/D/SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McKenna</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>21/11/2002</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Landlord</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>M/SB/D/SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laidlaw</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>13/12/2002</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>M+F</td>
<td>Engineer/Nurse</td>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>M/SB/D/SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- **M**: Self-Managed: projects that have been managed by the participant without the use of a general contractor or builder
- **SB**: Self-Build: projects where the participants have been directly engaged in the full range of building work, including construction
- **D**: Detailing: projects where participants have been directly engaged in detailing work: carpentry, fixtures and fittings etc
- **SD**: Self-Design: where all major design decisions were taken by participants
- **•**: Indicates age (approximate) at the date of interview
are given in appendix F) and permission was gained to take photographs (illustrations 11-25).

In addition to the interview and photographic records, a word exercise was carried out with each participant as a way to further explore the characteristics of individual projects and to test the assumptions of self-build companies explored in chapter three. As noted in the exploratory cases, while it was useful to reflect the narrative process of self-building in the structure of the interview, this had the effect of moving too swiftly over issues of concept and design. The purpose of inserting an 'exercise' was to break the narrative of the interview and to focus discussion on key themes that may have been present in the design of the home. Fifteen words were selected for the exercise reflecting key themes and oppositions within the analysis of self-build company brochures and advertisements. For example, chapter three discusses the frequency of the concept 'traditional' over that of 'modern,' and the idea of the 'unique' home over one which may be the result of standardised processes of production. Participants were given the freedom to make their own interpretation of the words presented to them. They were asked to select the words they felt had a bearing on their project and to reject those that had no or very little relevance. Each exercise was recorded (figures 13-18) and a summary provided for all participants in figure 19.

Anecdotal 'people-place' observations were noted on tape after the interview and appear as 'notes' after each transcript.

To support the process of interpreting interview transcripts thematically, QSR Nvivo software was used to code each transcript according to 14 common 'nodes.' These were derived through the process of 'reading' transcripts, by acknowledging themes that 'triggered' connections with issues observed in literature, or in other primary data (particularly from the analyses of brochures and advertisements in chapter three), or that were shared categories of experience between participants. For example, one node is labelled 'Building Regulations and Planning.' This is a theme that is common to all case-studies, arises in chapter two as part of a discussion about key issues that have shaped
the development of modern housing and in chapter three, as one of the 'basic services' provided by self-build companies. The other 13 nodes are: motivation (drivers to self-build), cultural background (details of a participant's history and the shaping of their attitudes to design), design influences (such as the media and other houses), lifestyle factors (choices about the project based on existing or future lifestyle or lifestage needs), cost as factor (the way cost impacts on design and building decisions), limitations (factors that limited achievement or expectations, such as skills or knowledge or law), do-it-yourself factors (aspects of the project participants did themselves), professional advice or services (reference to external support including people, organisations or publications), style factors (specific features in the design of the project), the design process (how participants made design decisions), anecdotes (related stories or experiences), metaphors (words or phrases that offer personal expressions of achievement) and outcome (a participant's subjective evaluation of their project). The 'node coding report' for 'lifestyle factors' has been included in appendix G, providing an example of the way the software collates themes across a number of transcripts.

Returning to the hypothesis of the study, that self-building has the capacity to stimulate well being, it is necessary to consider how the data in this chapter can support such a proposition. Chapter one suggested that well being was linked to creative processes, embracing the possibility of a dialogue about culture and identity as well as the opportunity to participate in a purposeful activity. The chapter goes on to suggest that creative processes, participation, the presence of a purposeful end or goal and the use of specialised knowledge form the attributes of serious amateur activity which is considered a provider of satisfaction in modern Western society. This chapter will attempt to show the presence of these attributes in the case-study material and later, in chapter five, theorisations will be made concerning the impact of external factors on the ability of self-building to sustain its amateur status and its capacity to provide a source of individual well being.
Participant Profiles

Before describing the discrete characteristics of each case, it is worth outlining some of the commonalties among them, mainly concerning location.

The case studies fall within approximately one hour commuting time by train from London within semi-rural locations (with the exception of McKenna who is on the outskirts of Farnham and Aldershot, with a commuting time to London of approximately 45 minutes). The quality of the historic market towns of Alton and Farnham, their proximity to open countryside as well as their relationship to London, has made property prices in the area particularly expensive and prone to inflation. This point is noted in the report on The UK Self-Build Housing Market (AMA 2003:9) that says the 'continued rise in property prices, particularly in full or high employment areas such as the South East, is also indicated to have boosted the self-build market.' The micro-economic climate of the South East also helps to explain a clustering of self-build activity in Hampshire. The South East of England Development Agency report on the Economic Impacts of Housing Affordability (SEEDA 2003:8) shows that the average cost of a property in the South East is 4.6 times income, while for England and Wales as a whole it is 3.5 times average income. However, within the South East region, the area of East Hampshire, where the case-studies are located, is relatively affordable (with an index of 4.6-5.5) compared with neighbouring Winchester to the West, and Waverly and Chichester to the East with indexes of 5.5-6.5 times average earnings. In addition, the localities of Alton and Medstead, known as 'tin town,' traditionally provided accommodation for small-holders by way of pre-fabricated tin homes following the First World War. The area also had much in the way of vernacular cottages on small-holdings, many of which have been available for redevelopment. The availability of plots for 'knock-down and build' purposes combined with the difficulty of finding affordable accommodation locally, has clearly attracted a cluster of self-builders to the area and provides a common driver for all six projects.
Murrell

The Murrell project began in 2000 and was occupied in 2002. The aim was to provide family accommodation for themselves and their two children. The project is based approximately seven miles south of Alton in the semi-rural area of Four Marks. The existing property at the time of purchase was a detached bungalow from around 1920 (illustration 12), typical of the area. The Murrells are a professional couple (electronic sales/lecturer) with two children under school age at the time of construction. They had had no previous experience of self-building, nor were they experienced themselves in the building trades. Their motivation to self-build was based on the desire for a larger family house within their available budget.

Both partners describe themselves as 'co-project managers' in that they devised their self-build independently and acted as the general contractor. Both partners played equal, although discrete roles: Mrs Murrell performed a managerial role, dealing with planning, finance as well as design and building decisions. Mr Murrell is described as being more 'hands on,' directly involved in building work and co-ordinating the activities of builders and other trades. They used a traditional (block and brick) method of construction and managed the design process themselves, without formal use of an architect or designer. The Murrells did not use a self-build company, however they did refer to self-build literature and magazines during the self-build process.

Bridgland/Jeson

The Bridgland (hereafter referred to as) project began in 2000 and was occupied in 2001. The aim was to provide family accommodation for themselves and their two school-age children. The project is based approximately six miles south of Alton in the semi-rural area of Medstead. The existing property at the time of purchase was a detached bungalow from around the 1920s, typical of the area. The Bridglands are a professional couple (airline pilot/learning support tutor). Although neither of them had had direct experience of self-building, Ms Bridgland had been involved with self-build projects in Australia, and Mr Jesson had
experience of 'refurbishing and re-building' work on other properties. The
decision to self-build resulted from the cost implications of renovating the existing
property – which was far greater than anticipated. They wanted a detached
house with as much space as they could afford, within commuting distance of
Gatwick Airport.

Both partners describe themselves as having a very high level of involvement
with the project, managing the project independently and acting as the general
contractor for all aspects of building work. They were both engaged in many
practical tasks and Mr Jesson especially, in detailing work. They used a timber
frame method of construction and managed the design process themselves,
without formal use of an architect or designer. The idea for the design of the
house was in part based on a design produced by a self-build company
(illustration 14) and they refer in their interview to attending a self-build home
show and to taking self-build magazines during the project. The Bridglands used
a self-build company to provide drawings of their design, and to supply and
construct the timber frame.

Dick

The Dick's project began in 1983 and was occupied in 1988. The aim was to
provide a spacious property with workshop facilities using existing collateral. The
project is based two miles east of Alton in the semi-rural hamlet of Beech. The
existing property at the time of purchase was a detached bungalow in very poor
condition, which was subsequently demolished. At the time of building, the Dick's
were a self-employed couple in mid-lifestage, looking to realise a property that
would suit their needs and lifestyle and would continue to do so into retirement
age. They had built their first house some five years after getting married, in the
early 1960s and with the exception of the roof tiling, they managed and built this
first property entirely themselves. This second project, although far more
complex than the first, draws upon substantial practical skill and experience in the
majority of trades associated with a project of its kind.
Despite running their own business, both partners describe their level of involvement in the project as ‘full-time.’ They devised their project independently and acted as the general contractor throughout the process. Both partners were involved with many practical aspects of the project, employing only a limited amount of labour for bricklaying and roof tiling. Drawing on their skills and experiences to this degree, the property was necessarily of traditional (brick and brick) construction and designed by them without the formal use of an architect. The Dicks did not make reference to using self-build industry products or magazines, although little by way of an organised self-build industry was available in the UK at this time.

**McBurney**

The McBurney project began in 1978 and was occupied in 1981. The aim was to provide spacious accommodation with a large amount of land, using existing collateral. The project is based approximately eight miles south of Alton in the semi-rural area of Monkwood. The existing property at the time of purchase was a corrugated iron bungalow from the 1920s, known as a ‘colonial.’ The McBurney’s are a semi-professional couple (engineer/telephone operator) who had had no previous experience of self-building or other general building work. Their motivation to self-build was based on lifestyle factors, predominantly the need for more space (for their hobbies), and to achieve this without borrowing.

Both partners were fully involved in all aspects of the project, undertaking design, drawing and building work themselves. Labour was hired for bricklaying, plastering and towards the end of the project, carpentry. Timber frame construction, referring to a company by the name of Guildway, had been considered for the project although a traditional construction method (block and brick) was thought by the McBurney’s to be more reliable and better suited to the time frame of their project. The project was achieved without professional services (for planning or design). While reference was made to an early edition of *Build Your Own Home* by Armor (1978), there would have been few mainstream self-build products or materials available at the time of the McBurney project.
**McKenna**

The McKenna project began in 1999 and was occupied in 2000. The aim was to build accommodation to suit his and his partners lifestyle needs. The project lies between Aldershot (approximately one mile) and Farnham (approximately two miles) on the Surrey/Hampshire border. The existing property at the time of purchase was a small artisan's cottage from the 1800s (illustration 22), near woodland and, prior to 19th and 20th century development, open countryside. The area would now be described as suburban. McKenna has substantial experience buying and selling property and previous to this, worked as a ground engineer for the armed forces. However, he had had no previous experience of self-building or other house-building work. Other than using a drawing firm to establish his design on paper, McKenna worked on all aspects of the project on a full-time basis. He employed a general labourer to assist him with building work.

McKenna wished to build his home in the area local to Farnham, in a spacious plot, and to achieve the project using existing collateral. Using a general contractor or self-build package was rejected on the grounds that such services inevitably increases the cost of building, and removes some elements of control from the key stakeholder. The project used a traditional (block and brick) method of construction and was designed by McKenna, without formal use of an architect or designer. Although McKenna did not use a self-build company he refers to self-build magazines and to attending at least four self-build home shows obtaining a great deal of literature from them.

**Laidlaw**

The Laidlaw project began in 1972 and was occupied in 1976, although detailing work continued for some time. The aim of the project was to provide family accommodation for themselves and their two children who were school age during the project. The project is based approximately eight miles south of Alton in the semi-rural area of Monkwood. Mr Laidlaw already owned the land, which had been in the family for some years. Originally there was a 'colonial' bungalow
on the site and Mr Laidlaw made the decision to build a new house following his marriage in 1971. Although both partners were in fulltime work (engineering and nursing), they were determined to build the house with a very minimal loan and to undertake all the building work themselves. They had had no previous experience of self-building, nor did they have experience in the building trades. Their motivation to self-build was based on the desire for a large, comfortable family house that would stand well in relation to the site (eight acres) but within a modest budget. Achieving this necessitated a project that would evolve over time as finances became available. As such it is the 'longest' of the six projects.

The house design was featured at the Ideal Home Exhibition in 1971 as a ‘North American style’ timber frame construction (illustration 24). The Laidlaws subsequently bought the plans and had them converted for traditional construction (illustration 23). A small amount of engineering work and roof tiling was sub-contracted, but other than this, the Laidlaws undertook all aspects of building and detailing work themselves.

The Typicality of Cases

In order to establish how typical the profile of case-studies presented here is against those of self-builders nationally, comparisons have been made to data which exists in secondary reference material.

One factor in assessing typicality is whether or not a project employs the services of an architect to generate the design of the house. It has been shown that only in a minority of cases do participants use architects, representing around 6 per cent of the self-build population (Maclnnes 1994). A further factor concerns the extent of involvement or participation in a project, from a low level of involvement in the case of 'turnkey' operations, to those at the highest end of participation where the self-builder entirely manages and constructs the project.

The report on The UK Self-Build Housing Market (AMA 2003) gives some indication of the 'typical' self-builder, suggesting that the market for self-building has shifted in recent years. The report states that 'traditionally it was seen that
the majority of people involved in self-build projects were those on low incomes that could not afford to enter their local property market (AMA 2003:23). The report goes on to suggest that currently, the largest sector of the market belongs to what it refers to as 'empty-nesters' on professional incomes in excess of £30,000. The report derives its statistics from surveys of readers of Build-It magazine, however, not from the actual self-build population (and as such represents a guide to the market rather than an analysis of it). Despite this, it is useful to compare this information with the participants in this study and to consider how typical they are compared with the market as a whole.

Appendix E: Typicality of Case-Studies provides an analysis of the information supplied in the AMA (2003) report in order to arrive at a definition of the most typical profile of a self-builder. The indicators of typicality are type of dwelling (detached or other); type of self-build method (turnkey, part construct, complete construct); number of bedrooms (from four to one); social group of participant (using social-class scale); age; and whether or not there are children under the age of 16. Using 'four' as the highest rating against each indicator and one as the lowest, a profile of the most typical self-builder emerges (appendix E, table 1). This shows that the most typical self-builder scores 24. The profile is one of a detached dwelling with four or more bedrooms, where the participant has part-constructed the dwelling (for example by using a combination of their own skills and labour and acting as the contractor for other services). They are typically in the age band 35-44, have no children under the age of 16 and they are likely to be in professional occupations in social-class group B. Using data from the case study-material (from interview transcripts and table 4) each of the six cases was scored according to the indicators derived from the AMA (2003) report (appendix E, table 2). This shows that Murrell and Bridgland are the most typical cases (scoring 22) while McKenna and Laidlaw are the least typical (scoring 15 and 17 respectively). While McKenna meets the contemporary definition of the 'empty-nester' in terms of his family commitments and the type of dwelling (being detached), other aspects of his profile, such as number of bedrooms, age and build type, generates the lowest rating of all the cases. As previously stated, the trend away from a full participation in the building process in favour of part-construction and turnkey operations (reflected in the more recent and typical

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Murrell and Bridgland cases), means that while Dick, McKenna, McBurney and Laidlaw may have been more typical of the profile of self-builders during the 1980s, against current market information they are less typical. Indeed they are consistent with the AMA report's suggestion that this type of 'traditional' self-builder used the self-build process to its fullest because of economic constraints while Murrell and Bridgland had sufficient capital and revenue to sub-contract parts of the process to other suppliers. The 'mean' typicality for the collection of cases is 78 percent representing a reasonably high level of typicality overall. However it is clear that there are two sub-groups within the collection: Murrell and Bridgland who are highly typical of the contemporary market and the remaining four who are typical of what AMA describes as the 'traditional market.'

The analysis and discussion of findings necessarily reflects on the impact of the profiles on the outcomes of the six projects and pays close attention to the sub-groups identified in this section.

Analysis of Findings

Motivating Factors

The motivation to self-build is determined by two discrete sets of factors, one concerns the cultural background of participants and the idea that self-building will help them to achieve a home more closely suited to their lifestyle and sense of personal and family identity. The other concerns the practical and to an extent, ultimately limiting factors such as cost and 'do-it-yourself' skills.

For example, Bridgland had prior knowledge of timber frame building and the self-building process owing to her family experiences in Australia, while her partner possessed sufficient practical skill, to engender a level of confidence in their ability to make a self-build project successful. They also spoke about their lifestyle in relation to work (the unsociable hours required of his job) and the need to 'zone' the house so that practical activities could take place at night, without disturbing the rest of the family.
A key motivating factor for all participants was the idea that they could acquire a larger plot than if they were buying property from existing housing stock (a motivation shared with many 'renovation projects'). For the McBurneys, their hobbies (keeping traction engines and horses) necessitated space, while for McKenna, the area itself held meaning (as the place where he grew up), in addition to feeling better suited to living in more isolated circumstances. Murrell also identifies with the need for 'privacy and seclusion,' and both Murrell and Bridgland suggest that the need for outdoor space for the children was an important factor.

'...its nice for the children, I mean its nice that they've got all this space to run around in, you know they've got dens down the field' (Bridgland).

The importance of gaining outdoor space however, is not simply an issue of plot size. With the exception of one participant, all the others identified the suitability of the word 'rural' to describe their projects during the word exercise (figure 19), suggesting that for these projects, the quality of the location and accessibility to countryside was a lifestyle requirement as much as plot size. This is further supported by the findings in chapter three, that suggests that the image of self-building presented in company literature is one of rural living (despite the presence of many urban examples), being associated with a better standard of living than urban environments provide. Indeed it is logical to assume that self-building would attract its largest volume of participants to rural and semi-rural locations as it is in these locations that plots for detached dwellings are more readily available and affordable.

Another important motivating factor was the desire to maximise the volume of interior space, within budget constraints. 'We wanted as much space as we could afford' (Bridgland), 'we wanted something roomy...a big sitting room...a big hall...from Kate's point of view she wanted a nice big kitchen' (Dick). Although McKenna was very restricted on the size of the plan, he was explicit about keeping 'most of the 90 square metres for living space.' Implicit in these remarks is the sensation that interior spaces too often 'feel' cramped and that self-building provides a way to define spatial arrangements around personal living
requirements. Inevitably, the desire for greater internal space confronts issues of cost and planning law, and these factors together, impact on the design of the house. The relationship of any one factor with others in the self-build process is a complex matter. Table 6 attempts to describe the flow of factors and their relationship to one another.

A further motivating factor concerns the ability of self-build to establish a home on a grander scale, but with limited risk. Dick, Laidlaw, McBurney and McKenna, were all motivated by the desire to use only existing collateral or to keep borrowing to an absolute minimum. These participants started their projects mid-lifestage, and all but McKenna would appear to have very modest incomes. The need to reduce financial risk and to retire without mortgage commitments appeared to be an over-riding concern.

'...our plan was not to have a loan, not borrow anything because everybody we knew as soon as they got into borrowing you had interest to pay off and then you can't build as fast or you run into trouble, or you can't finish it, our aim was not to get a mortgage' (McBurney).

These projects used collateral for start up costs but relied heavily on revenue and the contribution of their own labour to support the on-going building costs. Traditional (block and brick) construction allowed building to occur over time (a particular advantage to Dick and Laidlaw) as funds became available, reducing the need for borrowing.

The households Murrell and Bridgland, although determined to keep within their budget, appeared less concerned about the need for credit, as a result of more substantial incomes and the relatively low cost of borrowing at the time of their projects. The nature of their occupations and higher levels of revenue allowed these projects to sub-contract labour to a larger range of services and trades than was the case among the 'traditional' group. Despite these differences, however, neither group appeared particularly pre-occupied with re-sale value, although the ability to re-sell was a factor. Mrs McBurney specifically pointed out the need to create a home 'which would sell.' While the re-sale value of self-build homes can
Self-Build Flow Chart
often exceed 23 percent of the build costs (MacFarlane 1986:6), and the idea of speculative investment is widely promoted as a gain of self-building (for example Armor and Snell (2002:10) suggest increases in equity between 15 and 50 percent), none of the participants in this study found this to be an important motivating factor.

'If we'd just chosen to sell the bungalow, the time between purchase and the point where we were coming up to demolition, if we sold then, with a new valuation, that increase in equity would compare quiet favourably with the sort of profit we would make now if we sold this place, so its not speculative really...not to compensate for 2 years of effort that's gone into it' (Bridgland).

One of the key factors concerning value and investment, is therefore, less about immediate financial return, and far more about the ability to acquire property of greater value as a consequence of the self-build process (that can take place over a long period of time drawing upon income rather than savings (Laidlaw and Dick) and through the contribution of labour in exchange for a lower purchase price).

Given that none of the participants had direct experience of self-building, and that each project represents huge personal and financial investment, I was curious to ascertain what gave participants the confidence to take on a self-build project. And whether their motivation was re-enforced by a particular set of skills or personal attributes. All the participants were found to be highly tenacious. Murrell, for example went to some lengths to obtain the desired floor area and interior volumes, requiring careful and persistent research into the success or failure of other planning applications in the area:

'When we were looking to negotiate the price with her, I was down that planning office with toddler in tow, heavily pregnant every day going through the plans up and down this lane. What had been agreed, what hadn't been over the course of the previous years...to get a feel for what was going to be possible...'
They were also prepared to learn new processes, some desk-based, for example quantity surveying and design, some practical such as laying underfloor heating (Murrell) and fitting dry lining (Bridgland). Dick, McKenna, Laidlaw and McBurney were prepared to learn from scratch a range of building tasks and trades, and with some inventiveness. The fact that all participants within the 'traditional' group had some background in engineering will, I suspect, have contributed to a problem-based approach to new tasks:

'...in order to get [the roof] up I used 2 building towers, you know the 4 by 6 building towers, I had 2 of those and a boat bridge over the top, and when I made them I built them on the floor in that room, across the diagonals. I had Kate...holding the ropes on to steady it and I lifted it from the centre...swung them round and put them in, quite a straightforward engineering thing...but we had to think it all through' (Dick).

Three of the participants (Dick, Laidlaw and McBurney) were entirely pragmatic about the need for information, drawing advice from a range of sources, including the Utilisation Council (Dick), local building engineers (Laidlaw and Dick), and from library materials and publications, for example, Murray Armour's Build Your Own Home (McBurney).

It was also evident, especially for the more 'typical' projects, that participants possessed good co-ordination skills and were able to control the supply of materials and labour. Despite careful management however, it was also evident that some decisions were taken under pressure including the choice of materials, finishes and other details:

'there was so much going on...the electrician was in by then and he said where's the socket...one night I'm deciding where I want all the power points in the house' (Murrell).
What was also impressive was the sheer physical task and commitment of time needed to achieve these projects, for all participants, male and female. ‘...over a Saturday and Sunday we mixed about 40, 45 tons of concrete...all hand done’ (McBurney). ‘...the London Brick Company arrived with their lorry of 10,000 bricks, I only had the four of us to unload it’ (Laidlaw). ‘I was on it full time’ (Dick).

Other, quite extraordinary personal experiences were also revealed to me in terms of the motivation to self-build. Laidlaw for example, described his story about the trauma of severe asthma and how surviving a near fatal attack in his late twenties, gave him the confidence to ‘do anything.’ Although it is very difficult to read into the design of his home (Illustration 23) anything specifically related to his experience of illness, the design is of its time, the most contemporary (‘Glendower’ was a winning entry in the 1971 Ideal Home Exhibition (Ryan (1997) The Ideal Home Through the 20th Century)) and perhaps the most ambitious among the case-studies.

Given the number of cases, it is inappropriate to attempt to define common motivating factors across the spectrum of self-build projects. However, certain common themes occur within the cluster studied here. A key factor for all projects was the ability to gain a more substantial property (and of greater value) than could have been afforded through the purchase of existing housing stock. This should also be understood within the specific economic conditions of the South East where land cost are particularly high. With the exception of Laidlaw, who already owned his land, they also wanted more outdoor space and in more isolated circumstances, and self-building provided an opportunity to select a site for what it offered, irrespective of the quality or suitability of the accommodation. The opportunity to design a home to suit the lifestyle of participants was also strong among two of the cases (Murrell and Bridgland) but it is almost certainly a combination of financial and lifestyle factors that motivated participants rather than either of them in isolation. However the motivation to self-build also appears to be driven by personal qualities as much as ‘goals and gains.’ Personal ambition, a desire to improve one’s circumstances (in terms of lifestyle and financial security), as well as physical energy and tenacity, were qualities present
in all the projects irrespective of the particular socio-economic context of participants.

It is important to understand motivation in light of the attributes of serious amateur activity, as it is the presence of these within the self-build process which ultimately make it a fulfilling experience. All the projects can be seen as highly purposeful, in that the goal is both tangible and entails the perception of risk (a house that may not have re-sale qualities, or that financial factors or borrowing may result in an incomplete project or substantial debt.) The process of self-building can also be seen to have substantial gains: a home better suited to lifestyle and increases in equity. In both groups it is also shown that there was a requirement to gain new knowledge and skills and contribute effort, over a sustained period of time, to achieve the project. It is the combination of these factors that mark self-building as a serious amateur activity that has the capacity to generate personal fulfilment.

Cultural and Lifestyle Factors

As we have seen, one of the major functions of self-build projects is to achieve living accommodation that expresses the individual characteristics, needs and aspirations of participants. This is a factor discussed in some length in chapter three, Self-Build Companies, where it is noted that in Western society, and specifically in relation to self-build, the notion of the bespoke object carries particular connotations and is value-laden. Participant responses to the word exercise also makes clear that in their view, their homes are 'individual' (figure 19). Of course it is the nature of self-building (whether or not a package company is used) that homes are unique and bespoke, but that they say something about the individuals who create them relies upon the engagement of participants in the design process and self-awareness about what it is they wish to express. Indeed it is in the design stage that participants engage in processes of reflection and creativity, both of which are attributes of serious amateur activity and stimulate well-being. There is also a relationship between self-awareness and aesthetic awareness, (the ability to align stylistic modes and references with personal values and identity). The flow chart (table 6) attempts to show the
dynamic relationship between cultural and lifestyle factors (values associated with the household), design influences and style factors (aesthetic codes) and the design process. The cases show that the success of the design process is dependent on links being made between these factors, and within the parameters set by local planning authorities.

Gaining information about the cultural background of participants proved to be one of the most challenging aspects of case-study work. I was anxious not to ask for information about culture (or background) for its own sake. Instead I wanted participants to describe the link between personal values (whether associated with place, family or belief) and the type of home they wished to create. The word exercise was planned into the interview process to prompt participants to make connections between their projects and particular 'ideas' associated with self-building. This exercise proved a more effective way to gather information about values than open questions, (although what emerged was far more closely associated with lifestyle and lifestage and the connection of these factors to the design of the home. It did not generate information about cultural background.)

It is also important to note the social-class background of the participants within the study. None of them appear to come from affluent backgrounds. Where there is mention of family, occupations include agricultural work and farming (Laidlaw and McBurney), plastering (Dick and Murrell), maintenance work (McKenna) and 'gypsy types' (Bridgland). Despite the affluence of the Surrey/Hampshire area and the value of the properties built there, this cluster group would not describe their family background in middle-class terms (despite the professional occupations of the more 'typical' group). Neither did they reveal unusual cultural aspects of family background (although Bridgland's background is Australian) and none of them represent minority ethnic groups or described the impact of any particular 'belief' (political, spiritual or ecological) on the design of their homes. (The AMA report (2003) does not refer to participation by ethnic group although it does refer to the socio-economic grouping of readers of Built-It magazine, showing that 77 percent of readers fall into the higher income 'ABC1' groups (2003:23).) What can be drawn from this is that the lack of cultural diversity within the case-study cluster may well be representative of the market.
as a whole, while the social-class background of the group is less typical and less affluent than the market as a whole. There is certainly a relationship that emerges from these factors: the less affluent the participant, the higher the level of participation (in building processes) and the greater the equity gain on the project. Of course it would be highly problematic to measure levels of 'satisfaction' and well-being against levels of participation and equity gain, but it is reasonable to assume that there is a causal link given research referred to earlier (Jackson and Marks (1998)) that shows participation and creativity to be satisfiers of non-material needs.

During their interview the McBurney's describe themselves as 'country people.' Mrs McBurney was brought up on a farm and they both express a need for the isolation and outdoor space afforded by the semi-rural location. Their hobbies too are related to country living (traction engines and horse riding) and these require the appropriate context and accommodation (outbuildings and stables) that the type and size of plot could provide. (As 'holding' land, the ability to get planning permission for outbuildings was straightforward.)

For McKenna, the location itself had particular meaning. Having lived in the immediate area most of his life, acquiring land within the vicinity was like 'coming home.' He recalls childhood memories of camping in the woodland to the rear of the property and refers to the flints found there as Hungry Hill diamonds. Because of the use of flint as a local building material (much of the previous dwelling was made of flint), McKenna included decorative flint elements within the brickwork of the house and retaining walls (illustration 19). He was also careful to include in the new building other locally 'found' materials: bricks from the adjacent nineteenth century stable block are included as decorative elements in the retaining wall (illustration 21), bricks salvaged from the original dwelling are used in the garden and large slabs of slate from the cool house of the nineteenth century lodge (also adjacent) are used for the fireplace. McKenna links his interest in the archaeology of the site with a more general appreciation of old things:
‘I wanted to preserve a little bit of the old house, these beams actually
go out into the open which is a thing you don’t see much on new houses
these days, and also the wooden ceilings, the high ceilings at the side,
the internal brickwork, I wanted to create something that’s a little bit
old... there’s a Victorian wood burner...’

All participants discussed the impact of lifestyle factors on the design of the
home. Defining the type of space needed for family activity was very much at the
heart of the Bridgland and Murrell projects. Both families put the busiest ‘family’
space in a large ‘central’ area, giving priority to family and its informality over the
more usual and formal ‘social-symbolic’ function of the hall in domestic design
(conceived as a public entrance and space of transition to the more private areas
of the house). Greater informality in the definition of space is particularly true for
Murrell who rejected the inclusion of a separate dining room on an early design,
remarking:

‘...you don’t want a dining room, [the kids] eat in the kitchen... its only
with a party or Christmas that you’d want a dining room... so why don’t
we have an open form where I can put the dining table if we want a
party...’

The design of the Murrell home, with its atrium and ‘cathedral’ window, does
more than create a large space for busy family activity in the heart of the house –
it elevates the status of family activity by giving it priority over all other spatial
concerns.

The idea that space should be provided for busy areas (because they function as
important moments of social interchange (a ‘pattern’ described by Alexander
(1977)) also became a feature of the Dick home, who like Murrell, was very
critical of ‘narrow passages.

The needs of the extended family were also a conscious consideration of many of
the projects. The Dicks mention the need for space for the grandchildren to stay
and play, while both the Murrell and Bridgland projects include 'independent' ground floor guest facilities, for elderly parents in particular.

That the design of the house needs to reflect lifestage is also a feature of many of the projects. Bridgland acknowledges that the design suits 'the way we live now,' and McKenna, whose children have left home, wanted to reflect the much more limited (in terms of space) needs of his lifestyle. The Dicks, building their project in their early fifties, were quite explicit about the suitability of a bungalow for old age, particularly for wheelchair access.

Consideration was also given to the requirements of work and professional occupations in the design of three of the projects. Bridgland was explicit about the need to separate the male 'activity zone' from the family's sleeping area to accommodate his shift patterns and commuting time was also a factor in selecting the appropriate location for the project. The Dicks needed to incorporate a jewellers' workshop and the Murrells, who both work regularly from home, included a study facility.

A further key lifestyle factor concerns the importance participants attached to 'nature,' and the semi-rural location of each of these projects was important in this respect. For the families, having outdoor space for the children to play in (and for recreation – 'den' making) was an important factor in terms of choosing the location and site. Bridgland acknowledges the need to manage the opposition of 'nature' with 'culture' through the design of an 'airlock' space (to provide an effective cloakroom) so that elements of outdoors (coats, boots, dirt) are shed enabling those entering, 'to meet the house.' Other participants were keen to ensure that the design of the house gave easy access and 'views to' the outdoors, and the countryside beyond. Murrell spoke in detail about the orientation of the house so that she had a view of the garden and so that sun entered all the busy 'daytime' rooms in the house. The development of a large area of decking in the Bridgland project again expresses the value placed on outdoor activity and proximity to nature. The McBurney living room features very large patio doors, giving access to and full view of the garden. The position of the house on the plot was particularly important in relation to the landscape. The
McBurney’s sloping site determined that they would need to either level the site or dig into it. Their decision to level the site, requiring 310 tonnes of ballast, had the effect of raising the property, elevating it to provide views ‘over’ the landscape. The Dicks incorporated garden doors into each room, to ensure maximum access to the garden.

The word exercise shows that all the participants, with the exception of Dick, chose to identify the word ‘rural’ with their project. Given what has already been said about the natural orientation of self-building to rural and semi-rural locations where larger plots are more readily available, (as well as the notion of the rural idyll in self-build literature), it is unsurprising that the case-studies should express rural themes as a positive and particular gain of self-building.

Reference to technology, as an aesthetic feature or as a service to lifestyle was extremely limited. Only Murrell and Laidlaw identified ‘high-tech’ as part of the word exercise (figure 19). Murrell discussed technology in terms of wanting a media friendly house (TV and telephone in many of the rooms) and Laidlaw in a far more experimental sense, in relation to environmental features such the solar panel he designed himself.

Another important feature of self-building to impact upon quality of life is the building-in of greater practicality. Bridgland for example was determined to have external wood finishes that would require very little in the way of maintenance, and storage and cupboard space was also important to the McBurneys, as well as the Bridglands. Laidlaw used far higher building specifications than was demanded by regulations at the time (‘triple thick, brick, foam, thermolites and then...’) to ensure really effective insulation. In the Murrell house, the down stair’s guest room has a tiny built-in bathroom – that she claimed was easy to incorporate into the design and detailing of the house because of the self-build process, and is the type of additional specification that is rarely provided in ‘new homes’ of an equivalent price.

The ability to design a home around the specific needs of the household is clearly one of the advantages of self-building and contributes to the ‘unique and
individual' quality of each home. This is achieved through the ability to control the whole process, from site selection, design and specification, allowing each participant to tailor their project to reflect their lifestyle and lifestage. Every participant identified the word 'individual' with their project demonstrating what they perceive to be the unique fit of their home to the needs and values of the household. Although the flexibility of the design process is highlighted as one of the key features of self-building within company literature (table 2), the case-studies show that achieving an 'individualised' home relates to a larger range of decision-making processes than those concerned with design. It concerns locality, selection of plot, orientation, internal and external spatial relationships, quality and choice of specifications and the functionality of spaces among other factors. Making these decisions achieves far more than what might be considered the material needs of shelter, warmth and protection. These decisions necessitate reflection on the wider range of non-material needs – a consideration of values, identity and lifestage – and it is in the volume and complexity of these decisions that self-building is a particularly challenging and rewarding activity.

**Design influences and style factors**

We have already seen how a participant's personal interest in the archaeology of the site (McKenna) becomes reflected in design elements. Period architectural reference points have also influenced the design of the homes in this study. The proximity of a Victorian lodge adjacent to the site prompted McKenna to echo the design of his home on the idea of a small 'Victorian' villa. Murrell was also keen to build-in 'Victorian' features. Reminiscing about their previous house she says ‘we liked the Victorian house...we liked the feel, we liked the character...’ As a way to reflect their affection for the older property the Murrells included a decorative bead of brickwork immediately beneath the eaves of the house and garage, a copy of the detail from the previous house. The Murrells are also proposing to use salvaged Victorian bricks for the fireplace in the hall. A rather smaller detail, but of no less significance, is the use of paint from the 'Victorian' range produced by Fired Earth to decorate the house, and to 'build-in' character. The Dicks were also keen to incorporate period elements. During the interview
they made reference to liking the work of Lutyens and Georgian proportions particularly (for example using double height to width ratios for the internal and external doors).

The Bridglands were explicit about wanting to avoid period style, and were keen to develop a design that was ‘unique and individual...we wanted something that was particularly ours...we wanted something solid and crafted and...not faux tudor.’ They were also keen that their design should appear to reside ‘naturally’ in the locality, remarking ‘we did search high and wide...to find tiles and bricks...that would blend with the area.’ In addition to researching materials carefully, they were keen to see materials in context, finding properties locally that had used similar materials. They also use the words ‘mellow,’ ‘earthy’ and ‘rustic’ in particular, to describe the design of the house (illustrations 13 and 15).

It seems that building-in a sense of ‘age’ and ‘origin,’ as well as ‘rural-ness’ – in terms of the visual and tactile quality of the building, was a central concern. The inclusion of treated (but unpainted) timber cladding and window frames, as well as the earthy tones of other materials, creates an association with rural working buildings over domestic design.

The idea of creating a new home that has the sensation of age (Bridgland, McKenna, Murrell and Dick) and of being ‘solid’ and ‘crafted’ (McKenna, Dick, Laidlaw and Bridgland) is explored in chapter three to explain the popularity for vernacular and traditional styles in domestic building. What the findings here suggest, is that these qualities are palpable, emotive issues, and it is perceived that ‘new homes’ achieve this less well than the self-build home.

Not all the homes were influenced by a sense of the past however. The appeal of Laidlaw’s architect designed home was one of modernity; the modest pitch of the roof, deep overhangs and the use of very clean horizontal lines creates a sense of great assertiveness and command of space (illustration 25). Indeed, there was some recognition of its modernity through Laidlaw’s struggle with the Council to maintain the overhangs and the white cladding as they were specified on the original design (illustration 24) as these were considered to be ‘out of keeping' with the area.
The McBurney home is perhaps, more than the others, closer to the type of vernacular housing that occupied small-holdings in the area (small-scale one-storey constructions). It was the only project to have drawings generated by the participants, based on what they had liked in the layout of a previous home, and from borrowing plans from a local builder. The house consists of a basic one-storey T-shaped design, without contrivances or reference to 'architectural' models, and in construction terms, required little specialist engineering, equipment or materials (illustration 18). Indeed McBurney identified the word 'traditional' during the word exercise in keeping with the idea of traditional process and a more common (or vernacular) design.

What this section identifies is that the desire for a modern home that expresses contemporary attitudes to the family, or indeed draws upon 'new' systems (like underfloor heating (Bridgland and Murrell) by no means creates a tension with the desire for traditional features or a 'sense' of age. For example, consistent with so many new homes, is the requirement for either open fires (McKenna, Dick) or stoves (Murrell, Bridgland, Laidlaw) using traditional styling. (Although as Brand (1997:140) points out, this may have more to do with the damp nature of our climate, hence the need for heat to be visible, than it is solely to do with nostalgic styling.) Similarly with materials, although participants expressed the desire for practicality and limited maintenance, some participants deliberately used materials that would 'age' over time or that already had the effect of 'age.' For example, using hardwood for windows and doors (McKenna, Murrell, Dick and Bridgland), and handmade bricks and tiles (Dick) and 'antique tiles' (McKenna). Participants also expressed the wish to have 'real' and 'solid' internal fittings (for example, the Murrells rejected laminate flooring on this basis, and McKenna commissioned solid oak internal doors.) These examples show that on some occasions 'authenticity' is very highly valued (identified by four of the participants in the word exercise, figure 19), and on other occasions (a modern although period style cooker, McKenna) ignored.

The expression of 'values' in our homes is clearly complex and paradoxical. The results of the word exercise are typically mixed in this respect. This is partly due to the fact that the words were not 'defined' and could take on a range of
interpretations, but also because in the participants' view, home is a combination of 'authentic,' 'traditional,' 'contemporary' and 'innovative' (Murrell) and 'authentic,' 'crafted,' 'modern' and 'period style' (Dick). What self-build homes provide the opportunity to consider, is the way design influences and style factors enter the amateur design process. In only one case was a 'total' design concept purchased (Laidlaw). In the other five cases, design influences were 'adopted' and 'adapted' from local examples and existing source material, as well as elements taken from the 'home biographies' of participants. Clearly and necessarily this is in stark contrast to design decisions made within the commercial sector, which are made on the basis of an abstract notion of particular social groups and their values.

Building Regulations and Planning/Professional Advice and Services

Described in the previous section are the elements in the design of the self-build home that reflect the aspirations and values of participants. This section describes some of the other factors that determine the design of the home, namely building regulations and local planning rules, and the use of professional advice and services in the design of the home.

As with all building, local planning regulations set out certain restrictions on the placement, volume and type of dwelling (including design aspects) that are permitted within a locality. For the Dicks and Murrells, the property had to be of a similar type to the one it replaced, restricting their designs to ones that were essentially one-storey. Dick was also requested to keep 'well within the boundary.' Two of the participants (Murrell and McBurney) referred to the 50 percent rule, which restricted new developments to no more than an additional 50 percent of the floor area of the original dwelling. The Murrells, who were anxious to increase the floor area beyond 50 percent of the footprint of the previous dwelling, used the existence of a room in the loft of the previous dwelling to entitle them to greater floor area. In gaining acceptance to their proposal, they put all their available floor space on the ground floor and submitted a design that gave them a very large roof void. Having gained planning permission on their design, they re-applied, requesting that two of the downstairs bedrooms and the
bathrooms be put into the roof (without the need to increase the volume of the dwelling). Permission was granted. Mrs Murrell had undertaken a substantial amount of research to know that she could gain approval in this way, and made the structural design of the property capable of accommodating the modification.

For McKenna, his project was restricted to the footprint of the previous dwelling and its placement. Its position to the rear of the plot, immediately in front of woodland, cut into the hill, made it in his words 'cold, damp, and dark.' Despite this however, there was no restriction on height, hence the design of the property in the style of a small but relatively tall 'villa.'

Bridgland did not refer specifically to any restrictions, although the planning process saw protests from a neighbour, leading to a drop in the height of the roof, the loss of some volume as well as the 'southerly view' from their bedroom.

For three of the participants, some aspect of the design of the property was also challenged during the planning process. The original design of the Laidlaw home (illustration 24) included white cladding and long roof overhangs. Laidlaw was requested to omit the cladding but managed to maintain the overhangs, by trading off the virtues of using Cotswold brick. Murrell's first design was rejected on the basis that it was 'poor design' while McKenna matched the brickwork of the adjacent Victorian lodge to satisfy the planning authority that the design was in-keeping with the area. While none of the participants had to greatly modify their designs to satisfy planning regulations, all of the projects were for fairly conventional homes in locations that are not bound by conservation restrictions. Despite the diverse style of property found locally, there appears to be an incentive to maintain a fairly conservative approach to design through the nebulous 'in-keeping' rhetoric of planning authorities and latterly (though not in place for the cluster group considered here), the existence of Village Design Statements.

Self-build projects are also influenced by the degree to which professional advice and services are sought, either formally or informally. In the analysis of self-build companies in chapter three, it is shown that 'design services' are one of the main
features of the package company. Many companies publish design books (Design and Materials publishes a book with more than 150 house designs) and others include standard house plans within their brochures and on their websites. The statistic for the number of self-builders who employ the services of an architect is very small, around six percent (Maclnnes 1994). It is not then surprising that the participants in this study (with the exception of Laidlaw who bought plans) did not draw formally on the services of an architect or designer, preferring to use a number of informal services to develop the design of their home.

Bridgland, for example, having referenced a number of self-build brochures and considered how they might develop and extend the existing property, used an architect very informally, to ‘ratify’ their decision:

‘...we came up with the idea of going up half a level on top of the bungalow and then putting a two-storey ‘T’ on the end of it, and he [the architect] was quite keen on that idea because he said it effectively produced a fullstop because this is the last house on the street...so he liked that idea...and one of the self-build catalogues had a design which sort of fitted the picture...’

The architect was contracted to develop a set of plans that Southern Timber Frame (which included engineering services) used for the manufacture of the basic structure.

Similarly, Dick consulted with a friend who was an architect, and used him to ‘approve’ the design he had come up with. The Dicks were grateful of the modification the architect suggested and now perceive it to be one of the key success factors of their project:

‘...he took it [the design] away and came back and said well its OK, I can see what you want...there’s only one problem, the roof is massive, he said can I chop it in half, push it out and have a connecting roof...’
McKenna refers to using an architectural company 'to draw' his 'thoughts,' saying that he had designed the house 'in his head.' As with many of the participants, there is a sense that what McKenna needed was a visual statement to represent his mental picture, and subsequent to this, a set of drawings robust enough for planning and construction purposes.

Similarly, the Murrells refer to the help of a friend who 'was a builder...he had a computer package on his computer that enabled him to draw the building.'

Other forms of information were also important. The Ideal Home Exhibition (Laidlaw) and self-build shows (Murrell, McKenna and Bridgland) were important opportunities to gain information and to pick up self-build brochures. Industry magazines such as The Builder (Bridgland) and Homebuilding and Renovating (Murrell) also provided reference points, although participants were keen to stress that all these forums present glossy and expensive options for the self-builder. McKenna was particularly circumspect about the array of new products available for self-build projects insisting that they could easily over complicate a project and add considerable cost.

For participants who tackled major building work themselves, professional organisations were contacted for support with technical work. Dick for example, referred to the Utilisation Council for advice about chimney construction and consulted an engineer (as did the Murrells) for help with the design and construction of the roof.

Participants were also very pragmatic when it came to learning new trades and processes and used a combination of trade and other reference material. For putting up the plaster board, Dick says, 'we had a booklet which we used.' Laidlaw also refers to the fact that a lot of what he did 'was for the first time, it was learned through libraries, reading up about it, then doing.' McBurney bought himself a copy of Murray Armour's Build Your Own Home published as a first edition in 1978 as it contained information about building regulations.
The process of submitting designs for planning approval and the degree to which professional services were used during the design and build stages of a project clearly have an impact on the outcome of each project, either by placing limits on the ability of a participant to realise their goals, or by opening up new possibilities and solutions to design problems. Planning and professional services also represent a set of external factors that influence the design process of self-build projects, as opposed to lifestyle, cultural and cost factors that are the 'property' of participants.

This section also shows the way that self-builders acquire knowledge and skills to complete various stages of the project and the way advice is sought to deal with areas of uncertainty. Aspects of project management and co-ordination, sub-contracting, quantity surveying, specification, finishing and various trades (dependent on participation) were learned independently to a highly accomplished level. Some construction and trade work would be sub-contracted where factors of time, skill or finance made it unrealistic for self-builders to learn and perform them for themselves. However, there is a third area, of partly learned and accomplished skills, but that require checking, support or modification by professional services, that is evident in self-building as it is in other amateur activities. With the exception of Laidlaw, all the cases required some level of assistance with producing drawings, visualising the design or solving particular design problems. In each case participants were able to locate quite specific advice while maintaining their control over the design process.

The design process

The design process of self-build projects appears to be far more continuous and iterative than is the case within other product sectors (where design in all of its detail generally precedes manufacture). It is also the case, unlike most other product sectors, including commercial house-building, that the majority of self-build projects do not draw upon professional design services (of an architect or a designer), as is the case in this study. Indeed it is in the nature of self-building, a process that can take place over more time than commercial products, that allows many of the more detailed design decisions to occur during the process of
construction and even after occupation. (The fractured nature of the design process for self-builders has some resonance with 'pre-industrial' and some Third World building practices today (referred to in chapter two) where decisions about architectural detail are made between proprietor and craftsman during the building process.)

The process of establishing the basic design is an interesting one however, given that none of the participants have formal design skills. Both Dick and McKenna say that they established the design in their 'head' and were assisted with the translation of their mental concepts through the services of a friend (Dick) and by a drawing firm (McKenna):

'I just told this guy what I was thinking and he put it all down on paper and I got a set of plans which I was quite happy with...'

The Bridglands also refer to having 'fixed [mental] pictures' of what they wanted and again were assisted with the translation of their ideas by an architect. The use of prototype designs (either borrowed, McBurney, or by reference to self-build brochures, Bridgland, illustration 14) and reference to historic patterns, McKenna, also supported the generation of design concepts.

The design process also requires a perceptual understanding of space and the ability to understand the way schematic information (derived from sketches and plans) translates into physical space. This is true not only from the point of view of designing interior volumes, but also the way the physical form of the building changes the experiential qualities of the plot. This became apparent for Dick when the original dwelling was demolished and the plot appeared to shrink dramatically because as he says, you 'walk around buildings' generating a greater perception of space.

The ability to imagine forms as built constructions greatly assisted Mr Dick in realising his design, (which was not true for Mrs Dick who had great difficulty understanding how the design would translate into physical space). Despite this ability, he noted some difficulty perceiving the height of the rooms, adding that in
retrospect, a further two courses of brick would have given the rooms more satisfying proportions. Similarly in the Murrell project, the en-suite bathroom for the main bedroom felt far smaller than they had anticipated but it was only at the point of planning bathroom fixtures that this became evident.

Difficulties perceiving space and volume is further expressed by 'on the spot' changes to design as a consequence of the physical experience of space. The McBurney's knocked down a wall in the kitchen before it had set, as the spaces on either side of it felt too cramped. They also experienced difficulties perceiving how spaces would 'function': a built-in cupboard made one space particularly tight making it difficult to get furniture in and out. McKenna’s design was for a two-bedroom house, although having put the stud-wall in for the second bedroom he felt that it ‘absolutely killed the look of the ceiling, so I debated it for about 3 hours and I took it all down again.’

In professional circumstances the designer would use a variety of tools and techniques to assist the process of communicating a design to a client and to understand a range of structural, aesthetic and spatial problems. Although crude, it is clear that the participants in this study needed some basic tools to support their understanding of these factors. Referring to brochures, magazines and to other designs (Murrell, Bridgland, McKenna, McBurney and Dick) is in effect similar to the notion of a 'mood-board,' a process which is promoted by self-build companies to help clients build-up a picture of their stylistic preferences. The Bridglands created a cardboard model of the house and the Murrell’s friend used a CAD system to help them to realise their design. Again, the use of models and CAD are standard tools within the industry for communicating design concepts. No less effective was the use by Dick and McBurney of milk-crates and hardboard, laid out on the ground, to get a sense of interior space, as well as to establish how 'views' of the garden might be framed within interior spaces.

All the projects used a combination of friends (or indeed casual labourers who became friends) and professionals ‘to bounce ideas around’ and to render ideas to an acceptable standard for the purposes of planning and building regulations. This type of informal and on-going support was particularly valued by
participants. In addition to the development of the house design, this support also extended to the design of details; for example the Bridgland's bricklayer assisted them with a range of problems including the design of the fireplace and the builder who helped McKenna throughout his project created a decorative 'tractor-tread' feature to the brick wall as a reference to McKenna's previous occupation as a ground-engineer (illustration 20).

Another aspect of the design process is the consideration of the house in relation to the environment and particularly the site. The Brigdlands 'took photographs of the site' to their meeting with the architect as there were particular issues concerning the way the plot narrowed as well as the existence of a large Maple tree. The McBurneys have a sloping site and if they had chosen to 'dig-in,' only half the bungalow would have been visible from the drive and the north wall would have been cold and dark. They knew that by raising the house they would avoid such problems and have a better view of the field. It also '...made a house which is proud' (McBurney). The orientation of the house in relation to the sun was an important aspect of the Murrell design with sunlight maximised by large areas of glazing on the south side.

A marked feature of the design process was its iterative nature (the ability of participants to react to the project as it evolved and to modify the design based on experience and reflection). For example, Mr Dick refers to 'ideas coming in all the time...it's always evolving.' Mr Dick takes great pride in the way the house is designed, particularly some of the details that emerged while the project was in progress, such as the 'sunburst' detail and fanlight above the front door (illustration 17). The Bridglands also refer to ideas evolving (such as the design of the fireplace and the outside decking). The latter could only evolve once they had occupied the house for a while and could develop an understanding of the type of outdoor space they needed. The McBurneys modified the downstairs cloakroom to create a shower room for guests, again as a result of testing the design after occupation. McKenna included decorative details to the exterior brickwork 'during the process' and very much as ideas occurred to him. It is in the nature of self-building that a great number of the decisions regarding detail can evolve, as few of these need to be described for planning or building
regulation purposes. In this sense the design process for the amateur builder (and particularly those that do not use the services of self-build companies) is more extended, reflexive and adaptable than within professional contexts. Details are planned, designed and completed over time as budgets, time and the experience of living in the property informs the next, more detailed set of decisions, including choices about materials and finishes. While 'design flexibility' is promoted very highly indeed by self-build companies (table 2), this would appear to be more distinctly a feature of self-build projects where the design process is managed by participants. The promotion of 'turn key' products providing the full range of services to the self-builder will increasingly imitate professional design processes, eroding what is the uniquely valuable aspect of the self-build project. Indeed the analysis of company advertisements in chapter three suggests that 'professionalism' is the justification for choosing a self-build package and by drawing upon the services of a self-build company what might be perceived as an 'amateur' process with an 'unprofessional' outcome is ameliorated.

Outcomes

At the end of the interview, participants were asked to reflect on their achievement and how well the home they created fits with their original aspirations. Responses were necessarily very mixed, as the period of occupancy varied enormously from 16 years in the case of the Laidlaws to less than a year for the Murrells. Indeed the fact that the project was still on-going for both the Bridglands and the Murrells, made reflection and evaluation particularly difficult.

McBurney and Laidlaw expressed their satisfaction and achievement in terms of structural quality. McBurney stating that 'it hasn't moved' and Laidlaw, that 'its never had any leaks.' These comments too reflect the 'myth' that the self-build home can be amateurish (in the pejorative sense, likened to contingency and self-help housing).

Laidlaw also associated the 'success' of his home with the degree of satisfaction his partner had with it – but then he built the house very much for her.
The level of detailed knowledge participants have about the construction of their home was a comforting thought for McBurney (knowing the electrical plan and plumbing system) and for Laidlaw, but was unsettling for Dick, who had to learn to rely on and trust the structure he had built.

Relating emotionally to a project that has taken so much (emotional and physical energy) 'out' of participants, clearly generates some hesitancy when it comes to expressing 'achievement' or 'satisfaction' in the project. Dick referred to the process of occupation as 'unsettling' in that too much information about the way a house is built denies a sense of complete trust in it. The process of occupation is also very different to the process of moving into a new house, or one from existing housing stock. The 'gap' between an agreed purchase and moving in, is sufficient to generate a sense of excitement and anxiety which makes the moment memorable if not pleasurable. Self-building however, does not share the same process of occupancy. Purchase is not of a home but a site and occupation is often a protracted process with weekends spent on site to begin with and contents moved across from temporary accommodation as stages of the project are completed. Often occupation occurs before all the details are completed and basic elements of comfort, such as flooring (Murrell and Dick) and heating (Laidlaw), do not get resolved until some time after occupation. Many details remain incomplete too, such as cupboards and storage, and the finishing of whole rooms (Bridgland). The sense of relief and delight that is often attributed to home ownership, is not absent from self-build projects, but occurs more slowly and is expressed in a fundamentally different way, as one of pride in the achievement of the project.

For Laidlaw and Dick, self-building is clearly in itself an expressive and fulfilling process and the development of ideas and the solving of technical and aesthetic problems, is something they find personally very satisfying. Both participants have ambitions for further self-building, expressed more as a vocational calling than an act of 'home-making.' This is in contrast to Mrs Dick who is very resistant to the idea of more building work, because for her, the project was and still is about, 'home-making.'
The other participants expressed little desire to get involved in further self-build projects. For McKenna, whose more recent vocation had been the re-furbishing of houses, his project represents a resting place and a place for contemplation. For the Murrells and Bridglands, caught up in the maelstrom of family life, their priorities are more immediate (a home for their families) and they are by the nature of their lifestage, less able to express what their needs and values will be over time. The details (in terms of comfort and decorative finishing) of these projects still remain to be completed, and this too contributes to the sense that the participants themselves have not had sufficient time to reflect on their experiences or achievement.

Despite how 'new' and in some ways 'untested' some of the projects are, all of the participants were proud of their achievement and felt the project had fulfilled their aspirations. 'It's really good to have done it' (Murrell), 'love it' (Dick), 'ideal home' (Bridgland), 'the lap of luxury' (Laidlaw), and for McKenna it 'worked out far better' than he expected.

The overwhelming truth about these projects is the sheer physical endeavour of self-building and the highly practical level of involvement of participants. In this sense, the notion of creating a 'dream home' could not be further from the truth. The homes in this study were less the product of dreams, but of hard physical work, the acquisition of knowledge and skills, such as the ability to co-ordinate, plan and manage a complex sequential process and to make decisions about largely unfamiliar problems. Given that none of the participants used a 'package' of services from a self-build company, it may be the case that the level of practical engagement of participants in their project is more unusual than might otherwise be found. (Indeed the AMA Report into The UK self-Build Housing Market (2003:11) suggests that around eight percent of self-builders carry out all building work – whereas in this cluster two thirds of participants carried out the majority of work themselves.) However this might also mirror the sense of pride and level of affection that participants displayed for their homes, all of whom spoke animatedly and appeared to enjoy the interview process and the moment of reflection it provided.
Summary

The central hypothesis within this enquiry is the notion that self-building has the capacity to stimulate individual and social well being. It is further suggested that it can do this because self-building shares the attributes of 'serious amateur' activity. The most important aspect of the activity is the level and particular type of participation it affords. Participants are engaged in a reflective process and one that is creative (as it affords the opportunity to consider among other things, identity). A number of studies have confronted the idea that participation in housing design offers value in this respect, (Turner (1972), Rapoport (1968), IOH/RIBA (1988), Darke (1984) and others discussed in chapter two), but none have tested such a proposition within the context of the more comprehensive and individualised activity of 'private' self-building. The experiences of the six participants in this study demonstrate very clearly that the self-build process actively engages participants in a range of reflective and creative processes. Both the design and construction process draws on information about values, lifestyle, lifestage and personal biographical material and through a process of reflection and selection, assimilates information about identity into the design of the home. The exploration of identity through the self-build process is subtle. Research conducted by Israel (2003) that explicitly uses psychoanalytical methods within the design process, draws from participants overt visual and textual information about their identity for inclusion within the design process. None of the participants in this study subjected themselves to such a conscious process of reflection. However, in making decisions about design, it is clear that personal needs and values have been expressed and made manifest in the design of the home. The case-studies explored in this chapter have taken a retrospective look at the self-build process and has shown that as a process it offers rich potential for identity to be explored and assimilated across a number of factors such as the selection of location, the design of the structure, its visual treatment, selection of materials, orientation and internal layout. It has been shown that the design of the home is a reflection of the needs and aspirations of participants. For example, the nature of the McBurney home, without extravagance or contrivance, reflects their view of their own lifestyle and the
priority of the site (providing outdoor space and facilities for countryside activities) over more sophisticated accommodation. While for McKenna, his home reflects his interest in historical patterns and the location is rich in meaning too, associated with childhood memories of growing-up nearby. The interior proportions of the Dick's home are expressive of their confidence (as second time around self-builders) and the expansive nature of their personalities and lifestyle (both of them are artistic and enjoy collecting). The Bridgland's home, while substantial, reflects their desire for understatement in design through the avoidance of period styling. While both the Bridglands and Murrells wanted large family homes, it seems they would have felt uncomfortable in a home of 'prestigious' or 'grand' connotations. For Mr Laidlaw, the use of a contemporary design for his home reflected his self-esteem and ambitions for the future at a particularly critical point in his life.

In this sense, the idea that the home is 'individual,' in that it expresses something of the particular values of participants, is common among the case-studies. Given this, it can be asserted that part of the value of self-building is the opportunity to build a home to fit a particular view of who we are. This lies well beyond the value of self-building in terms of equity gains. It has also been established that the home is not just the expression of who we are, it is the place in which our identity exists and where it is played out for others. It is the place where we are 'at home' – in other words it 'actualises our existence in the world' (Heidegger in Leach 1997:101). The importance attached to the home as the location of identity is what establishes self-building as a particularly powerful vehicle for accomplishing well-being. Not only is the home the location of identity, but it has been uniquely formed to perform this task and it embodies the effort and skill of those who created it. The presence of the self-build home acts as a continual reminder that it owes its existence in the landscape and its form to the particular knowledge, skill, labour and values of the self-builder and it is these factors which make the self-build home omnipresent. It has also been suggested that part of the 'achievement factor' which leads to well-being, is the opportunity to significantly develop knowledge and skills. Indeed the discussion of case-studies shows that participants gain a number of practical, project-management
and problem-solving skills, and that these are acquired through committed 
research, experiment and practice.

The chapter has also demonstrated however, that the development of the home as a personalised artefact occurs within the context of planning law, cost and market factors (including the commercial house-building sector) as well as the skills of participants. And it is important to consider whether these place constraints on the design of (and the incorporation of the individual into) self-build projects.

Although cost is clearly a constraint (and has deterred participants from investigating high-tech or ecological solutions, or indeed using architects on a formal basis), participants' skills do not appear to have placed constraints on the ability to plan and manage a self-build project. In terms of co-ordinating projects of this kind and undertaking a design process, all the participants showed great tenacity and an ability to learn 'as they go.' They were also free to decide where they needed to contract particular services (for example engineering, design or trades), and where they needed guidance through other forms of consultation or publication. They also generated their own knowledge, for example through the study of local planning applications. Indeed, in this respect, a sense of curiosity and a readiness to learn, appears to be more essential as a prerequisite to self-building than knowledge and skills directly related to house-building.

The planning process however could clearly be seen to place limits on projects, largely in respect to floor area and volume more than design (although the plans for the Laidlaw and Murrell projects were modified in response to issues concerning design). Despite the necessary intervention of planning on these issues, it is very difficult to judge its impact on the conceptual development of the design as the majority of design decisions are made prior to planning permission being sought (although increasingly local planning authorities are encouraged to publish design guidance for all property development in their area).

More than the planning process, market factors appear to have impacted significantly on design. A key issue being re-sale, and hence the ability of the
house to 'appeal' to a range of buyers should participants have to place their
property on the market. This necessarily affects property value, as the greater
the appeal of a property the more competitive the purchase process becomes.
Clearly there are tensions for self-builders between generating a home which is
‘individual’ and one that will respond to the market. A further way that market
factors impact upon design concerns the design process itself, and the
dependency of self-builders on standard house patterns, that are already ‘market-
tested.’

Despite showing the aptitude of participants to learn the skills necessary for
designing and building a home, the case-studies also show how limited the
conceptual stage of the design process was for the self-build projects discussed
here. Combined with market forces, this represents the most profoundly limiting
factor in terms of the expression of ‘personal’ content in the physical structure of
self-build homes. The conceptual stage of the design process involves bringing
self-awareness of issues of personal identity together with aesthetic and visual
knowledge so that expressions of identity can be given concrete form. None of
the participants appeared to engage with this as a conscious process. The
interviews revealed that the design problem was conceived largely as one of
gaining maximum space, and achieving an internal layout to meet lifestyle
standards. Of course all participants took great care and a lot of time working out
the design in relation to their needs and somewhat subconsciously giving form to
their ideas. However I was left feeling that the search for the right architectural
form lay at some distance from the people themselves; and that the ‘right’ form
could be ‘found’ and ‘modified’ by searching through existing patterns. In other
words, participants did not engage with their ideas about home in an abstract way
or wonder consciously, how these might become a visual language and
‘individual’ expression of home. There was some sensation that this process
occurred in the Bridgland project, where the participants had attempted to find a
pattern and a range of materials to express notions of rusticity, earthiness,
mellowness, solid and crafted; placing importance on timber as an expression of
these values.
The notion that self-build projects act as a site for the expression of cultural specificity is extremely valuable, and these projects uniquely offer the opportunity for individuals to design and create on a significant scale, and at a pace controlled (largely) by them. And the process, which is highly emotional and physical, has clearly generated homes that are valued by their owners. However, it is an activity (like other cultural activities) that is moderated by the pressures of the market and hindered by particular aspects of the design process, that are yet to be effectively facilitated. Self-building clearly provides the potential for personal fulfilment by creating homes around individuals and their needs. Just as the commercial housing industry needs the skills of architects and designers, so too does the self-build industry. We know from the discussion of the contemporary self-build industry in chapter three that it is increasingly typified by ‘off-the-shelf’ products and design solutions that are commercially ‘popular’ rather than ‘particular.’ These products, like those of the commercial housing-building industry, base their designs on notional ‘segments’ of the market and current ‘taste’ themes. In the absence of more effective facilitation processes and as the market for self-building shifts increasingly towards the use of self-build packages, there is a real concern that the design process will become one of adopting and adapting commercial models rather than one of self-reflection and creativity. Architects and designers clearly have a tremendous role to play within the self-build industry - not in terms of taking the design process away from participants, but in bringing it closer to them, to support the process of building-in greater specificity and personal expression.
Laidlaw 3
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

' the emergence of a new culture of amateurism...is making itself felt well beyond sports...In developed societies people are living longer, healthier lives, with extended periods of retirement, in which it is possible to pursue active hobbies and pursuits. This allows keen amateurs to devote their newly found leisure time to building houses, restoring boats, making models...to take some examples. Amateur pursuits are part of a reaction against commercialism. They give people a sense of purpose that has nothing to do with making money' (Leadbeater, C 2003:22).

Introduction

This section will summarise the findings of the research into recent self-build projects. It will begin by restating the research hypothesis followed by a discussion of the issues that have emerged in each chapter and whether these pose particular problems or challenges to the study of self-build homes as a cultural activity.

The introduction to the thesis posed a set of sub-themes to guide the research and chapter one proposed a number of theoretical tools for interpreting the data within the study. The 'discussion of findings' assesses each theme in turn and asks how the theoretical tools can be used to evaluate self-build activity.

The section 'conclusions' brings together the findings of the research to define the 'value' of self-building (in terms of a capacity to stimulate well being) and offers a commentary about the relevance of the research to the field of design history and material culture.

Necessarily the research findings point to the need for further research particularly where the study has found new data that will impact upon future housing design in the UK and self-building in particular.
Discussion of findings

The hypothesis for the study emerged from the statement made by John Turner in 1972 when he asserted that a 'dwellers' control of major decisions concerning the design, construction and management of their housing, stimulates 'individual and social well being.' Turner's interest in user participation in both the UK and the developing world was at a time when there was little recognition of the value of participation in architectural design and housing re-development. Despite the fact that subsequently there has been significant attention to the issues of participation, particularly in the context of public housing and re-development schemes, there has been no consideration of Turner's assertion within the 'private' self-build sector – a sector that is now significant in that it builds as many homes each year as any two of the UKs largest developers put together (AMA 2003:8). This study attaches Turner's assertion to private self-build projects and seeks to evaluate how self-building contributes to well being, within current social and cultural conditions. Further to this, the study wishes to place self-building within the context of design history and material culture, and to examine self-building as a postmodern phenomenon.

In order to test Turner's assertion in the context of contemporary self-building however, it was necessary to build an understanding of the particular activity of private self-building and to assemble the literature and the 'history' of the activity – for which there was no singular authoritative source or collection of sources. It was also necessary to regard the object of study – the self-build home – with objectivity and to assess what type of cultural phenomenon it represents and what theoretical, interpretative and methodological tools should be applied to it. Despite the fact that the private self-build home indeed appears to be a 'new' object of study, approaches to the study of visual and material culture, described within cultural studies and design history predominantly, provide a number of methods tested on similar phenomenon (for example, housing design, printed advertisements, people-place observations).

However as noted earlier in the introduction, the activity of self-building, like other forms of serious amateur activity, has yet to be located or consolidated within a
particular field of knowledge and as such it has been necessary in this study to bridge areas of sociology (concerned with the location of well being and happiness) with those of design history (concerned with the development of a contextual understanding of objects).

The discussion of literature in chapters one and two raise important issues for examining well being in the context of contemporary self-building.

One of the most intriguing questions that must be asked in relationship to well being is what makes a home (and a self-built one in particular) more able to cater for our non-material needs (and thus provide greater meaning). And whether meaningfulness is attached to the idea that self-building allows participants to express their personal aspirations more fully in the design of the home, endowing the home with a unique 'individuality.' A number of authorities would appear to concur with this point although from different perspectives. Rapoport (1968:300) for example, considers that personalising the environment is fundamental to giving it meaning, while Korosec-Sefarty (1984:317) and Attfield (2000:188) suggest that the process of adaptation and of user 'control' of the environment is a key to appropriating the home and achieving a level of self-actualisation (the environment becoming more fully integrated with the identity of the individual). Indeed, Marcus (1995:10) refers to a similar concept in her studies of environmental psychology as a 'process of individuation.'

Evidence from the analysis of self-build company literature would appear to concur with this idea, where the concept of the highly 'individual' home is perceived to be a key gain of self-building. This is not tested by self-build companies through research however, but is based upon a view of what is valued in society and supported through the empirical experiences of the companies themselves. A function of the literature review in chapter one and the mapping of self-building ideologically in chapter two, is to give justification through research to the presence of certain social and cultural 'values' in relationship to the home and to participation in home design, and to provide explanations (in chapters three and four) about why such values can be ascribed to self-building.
One of the more complex values is the idea of the individual home and case-study material in chapter four shows that the meaningfulness of a self-build home becomes embedded in decisions about design, selection of materials and processes, as well as the project 'journey' that requires ambition and tenacity to achieve a successful outcome. Self-building to this extent becomes an important biographical feature in that it is memorable and significant to participants (due to the challenging nature and the scale of the achievement) and contributes to personal development. The opportunity for personal development makes the self-build home meaningful and individual, perhaps more so than the particularities of the design. Indeed the facility for participants to express themselves in the design of their home was in fact found to be lacking and indeed the least well articulated aspect of the self-build process.

A further concept related to the greater meaningfulness of the self-build home concerns its 'unique' quality. Again it was evident in the analysis of self-build company brochures that this was an important concept in the promotion of self-build products. The idea of the 'unique' home was linked to the development of social esteem (Fiske 1990:81), functioning in opposition to the mass-produced object thought to be lacking esteem. While the concept 'unique' provides self-build companies with a powerful promotional device, it does not appear to contribute in any material way to the added meaning of the self-build home. Indeed all homes are unique and we are actively encouraged through extensive media coverage to adapt and decorate our environments according to our own tastes and trends in interior styling. However, 'uniqueness' is clearly important within the market for new homes, as Hanson (1998:138) has argued in her discussion of commercial house-building in Milton Keynes and is attached to notions of social esteem. Indeed, interviews with participants revealed that while the 'unique' home did not prove to be a significant factor (because the individual home was available), the notion of social esteem did prove to be significant. For example, the 'type' of properties participants built (detached) and the location they built them in (large plots in semi-rural Hampshire locations), as well as the gains in equity, were factors contributing to the esteem of the projects – and by association, to individuals.
The discussion of literature and the analysis of self-build company brochures provide other possible clues about the added value attached to self-build homes. These too are associated with ideological aspirations including social esteem and builds on the idea that the self-build home has greater 'authenticity' than other new homes. I have suggested that the frequency of the words 'craft, crafted, craftsmanship' in company literature is a vehicle for promoting the quality of self-build products and to attach to products a 'special' and 'unique' factor associated with the craft object in Western society. In reality though, the construction of a self-build home usually draws upon the same industrial materials and processes as other commercially built properties and there is no evidence to suggest that within mainstream self-building (where construction is sub-contracted) that the standards of basic materials and construction are any more superior. However the case-study material in chapter four shows that participants who were involved in construction (Laidlaw, McBurney, Dick and McKenna) cared deeply about the quality of the build and in many cases were at pains to exceed minimum technical standards. It was also clear that internal specifications and fittings were of a much higher standard than participants perceived to be the case in the commercial sector and the quality of materials was often described to me in terms of their 'authenticity.' This included Dick's hand-made bricks, McKenna's antique tiles and solid oak doors and Murrell's choice of solid wood over laminate flooring. However, the fact that participants appeared to care deeply about the quality of their work seems less related to ideas of social esteem (promoted by self-build companies) and far more concerned with traditional concepts of craft in terms of the quality of materials and their perceived appropriateness to given situations.

It has already been suggested that self-building contributes to well being because participants contribute their own labour to the build costs and as a consequence, gain a property of greater value than they would otherwise have been able to afford. Clearly this is a factor which motivates self-build participants and was seen to be the case in the cluster group discussed in chapter four. It was clear that affordability was a key factor and only through self-building could participants hope to attain a particular lifestyle. Similarly company advertisements were found to emphasis 'lifestyle' values, frequently claiming that self-building enables
participants to achieve a more fulfilled existence through the realisation of their
'dream home.' The discussion in chapter three noted that the expression 'dream
home' was the second most frequently stated in the word count exercise and that
company advertisements communicated the ideals of the dream home and its
associated lifestyle in sophisticated and fairly consistent ways. The Potton
advertisement (illustration 3) for example employs a 'fade' device to communicate
the notion of the dreaming child and a narrative about the ideal home (luxurious,
secure, with carefully deployed period references creating a sense that the dream
home exists in an idealised past). Indeed it is fair to say that the 'image' of the
ideal home is overwhelmingly an 'old' home with the majority of illustrations,
whether photographic exemplars or hand-rendered drawings, showing historical
models or rusticated vernacular buildings (particularly barns). Other values are
also attached to the notion that the ideal home is an old home. In the SBHC
advertisement (illustration 4), 'warmth' is communicated through the plume of
smoke from the chimney of a period-style house and we know with some
certainty that this is emitted from a traditional open fire. The advertisement for
Border Oak (illustration 7) adds the notion of 'rural craft' through the hand-
rendered style of the illustration as well as showing an early timber frame pattern
within what appears to be a rural setting. The Alpine advertisement (illustration
5) similarly evokes a rural setting and a nostalgic image of home that I have
likened to the style of picture book illustration.

No one would argue with an image of the ideal home that references warmth,
security and protection (Lawrence 1987:48 and Rapoport and Dawson
1998:236), however that such ideals are enshrined in the image of the 'old' home
is more intriguing. It has been suggested earlier that the urge to create a home
that evokes 'age' (and this was a notable feature in a number of the cases)
carries with it important 'mythical' qualities. The 'old' home is perceived to have
'experience' which is communicated through the architectural pattern of the
building, the distressed quality of the materials as they have been eroded by
weather and touch, as well as the smell of the materials and the sounds they
make – all of which are particularised through age. Indeed the use of
phenomenology to account for the 'meaning' of home provides a powerful insight
into the importance given to 'age' in images of the ideal home.
Of course the notion of age is paradoxical for the self-build home which is quite evidently 'new' and it is clearly a concern of some postmodern commentators (Frampton, Habermas) and avant-garde architects (post-structuralists among them) who see the 'cult of the vernacular' as one which is 'uncritical' and offers little meaningful dialogue about the complexity of contemporary culture and the particularities of time, location and identity.

Indeed the need to accommodate the 'mythical' qualities of home need not limit housing form to historical prototypes as many contemporary examples make clear. However, it may well be perceived that the strategies described above provide a 'short-cut' to the ideal home and the accomplishment of associated lifestyle values.

Before returning to a discussion of the case-studies against the above propositions it is necessary to consider some of the historical debates concerning domestic architecture and the 'external' forces of the market and of planning policy as these also help to explain the current popularity of traditional building styles within mainstream self-building.

It is has been shown in chapter two, for example, that recent debates about domestic architecture have tended to be polarised rather simplistically around issues of style (modernist or traditional) rather than what is appropriate and meets needs. Indeed, what is popular, described by Jeremiah (2000:211) as patterns based on the English village, and the importance attached to catering for popular taste (HRH Prince of Wales 1984), has come to define styling in the commercial as well as self-build sector.

It has also been shown that the conservation movement, environmentalism and social inclusion (championed by participatory approaches) have also re-enforced a popular appreciation of historical architecture, leading to the promotion of what appears to be conservative and harmonising approaches to housing design within mainstream building.
Recent planning policy has attempted to embrace some of the criticism of the monotonous nature of housing schemes by encouraging the development of community facilities, greater variety of design and mixed tenure. However, despite the work of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE 2003:20), advocating contemporary and innovative approaches to design, pastiches based on historical patterns would appear to prevail. Hanson (1998:139) suggests that approaches to styling are to give the appearance of diversity but what this amounts to is the addition of certain 'features' onto fairly standard (and traditional) patterns. Hanson also points to the lack of attention given to locale and criticises developments in Milton Keynes 'that would look equally appropriate in a suburban development almost anywhere in the country.' The problem that Hanson and others (Brand 1997:73) articulate is that market forces (the need for housing to be popular and 'inspectable') have inevitably lead to homogenised and conservative approaches to housing design based on a popular interpretation of the dream home (employing what Jameson (1994:197) has referred to as postmodern marketing strategies).

It is also worth adding a note here about the recent addition of 'village design statements' to local planning policy. These have evolved to give planning departments greater authority in assessing the appropriateness of housing developments in their area and they give particular focus to the need for diverse approaches to design that should also pay careful attention to local ecology and building traditions. Although the logic behind these statements is perfectly laudable, they offer very little support or encouragement to house-builders (including self-builders) wishing to adopt more innovative or personal approaches. The three design statements collected for this study emphasise harmonisation over more critical approaches and go so far as to prescribe particular shapes, architectural details and materials.

Returning to consider the case-study material in chapter four it is necessary to evaluate the 'meaning' of the self-build home having considered the complex social, commercial and psychological factors that contribute towards the process of realising this type of project and ultimately whether self-building can contribute to well being.
Crucially this must include a discussion of whether a participant's home is better tailored to their needs and aspirations; more expressive of their identity (visually and for what it symbolises in terms of life-journey); and whether there have been other gains (for example the development of certain skills, including complex project management, design and building skills) that also contribute to well being.

A common motivating factor for all the projects concerned the desire to meet needs and aspirations more fully than could be accomplished through conventional systems of house purchase. Indeed none of the participants appeared particularly motivated by the self-build process but were 'led to it' because of financial constraints combined with the desirability of particular locations (for example, McKenna was emotionally attached to the area where he built his property, the Bridglands needed to be within commuting distance of Gatwick Airport and Mr Laidlaw already owned his land.) The size of the plot was also important to participants as this contributed to lifestyle aspirations that could not have otherwise been afforded without considerable compromise in terms of the size and condition of dwelling accommodation. The McBurneys have particular hobbies that require space (horses and traction engines) and they describe their personalities in terms of being 'country people.' For the Murrells and the Bridglands, having good quality outdoor space, in a semi-rural setting was important for family life and met with their aspirations for their children. A further aspiration concerned indoor space and matching the arrangement of space around lifestyle and lifestage. The Dicks for example were keen to build a one-storey dwelling despite this being a requirement of local planning, as they were anticipating their needs into retirement age. The Murrells and Bridglands spoke of the need to maximise the volume of interior space to accommodate work patterns and practices and the needs of the extended family. Laidlaw on the other hand, wanted to create a house that represented his ambitions and that symbolised his confidence in himself following a major trauma. Participants also expressed a range of more detailed 'needs' and these too were featured in the design of each home. Mrs Murrell for example, wanted an arrangement that allows her to know 'what is going on' in the house. The central atrium and balconied upper floor enables her to do just this and indeed she can follow the
activity of the house through sound as well as sight. Mrs Murrell also, like the McBurneys and the Dicks, wished to maximise the relationship of the house to the garden and allow as much direct sunlight as possible to enter the house.

Indeed it is possible to conclude that on a practical level, participants appeared to identify their needs and incorporate these into the design of the house successfully and there was little suggestion during the interviews that alternative approaches might have yielded more appropriate outcomes.

It is also true that participants 'built-in' to the design of their home particular formal, material and decorative details that were expressive of their particular tastes and interests. This included a decorative bead of brick in a Victorian pattern in the Murrell home and the use of a Victorian pattern for the design of McKenna's home. McKenna also used locally found materials as these represented the locale and he was keen that a sense of 'age' be incorporated into the design to reflect his interest in historical artefacts. The Dicks referred to the work of Lutyens and claimed to have incorporated certain stylistic elements from his work into the design of their home. The Bridglands were anxious to avoid period styling preferring to adopt the more rusticated quality of working farm buildings that would 'blend with the area.' The McBurney's home offers continuity with the type of small-holding property found on plots of this kind in the area and the hierarchical importance of land over domestic accommodation within the traditional local economy. Indeed they were critical of the size of some recent developments finding them to be out of keeping with the economic and social history of the area.

The ability to bring personal expression into home design is available to the majority of home owners at one level or another through adaptations to the structure of buildings and to decorative finishes and details. What is particular to self-building is the degree to which the opportunity for personalisation is brought to bear on the design process and whether this is exploited in ways that produce more 'individual' homes. It is clear from the discussion of case-study material, that personal needs, aspirations and taste informed design decisions. However I have suggested in chapter four that the development of the basic design concept
lacked effective facilitation and some of the designs (Laidlaw, Bridgland, McKenna) were adaptations of existing models. I have also suggested that market forces play a role in design decisions and that participants were conscious that their properties would need to be designed in such a way that they would remain competitive with other properties in the area. Planning issues too impacted on design at the conceptual stage. Despite the fact that village design statements were not available to the cluster group at the time of their projects, participants were aware of the general 'in-keeping' rule and the need to remain within a broadly conservative design code. Laidlaw's property conforms least to current design guidelines and one wonders whether the design would gain approval today.

The issue is not a concern for innovative or original design but whether the self-build process has been fully exploited to bring the identity of individuals to the design process. It is an issue that also recognises the complexity of the conceptual stage of the self-build process (arguably the most important) in that it must mediate the aspirations and identities of individuals with market forces, popular social and aesthetic codes, and the requirements of building regulations and planning departments. Indeed I would argue that of all the stages of the self-build process, this is the one that requires greatest professional support and should assist participants in developing 'cultural specificity' through a fuller engagement with the issues of identity and design during the conceptual stages of the project.

Interviews also revealed that participants gained a range of skills and that these too contributed to a sense of personal fulfilment and well being. These included the development of detailed drawings (McBurney), a range of building and trades skills (McBurney, Dick, McKenna, Laidlaw), design, problem-solving and project management skills (all participants), finishing and carpentry (all participants). There were no particular gender differences in the activities that men and women in the study adopted. Both genders contributed to building and construction work where these activities occurred and both were involved with project management and co-ordination although Mrs Murrell and Ms Bridgland appear to have taken greater responsibility for project management within their projects. Indeed, in
aspects associated with the building process, participants were self-reliant and were able to access a number of formal and informal support agencies (for example the Utilisation Council, local builders and engineers, magazines and self-help literature). However, the confidence of participants in this study to embark on complex projects and to learn unfamiliar tasks does not accord with the sentiments of self-build company literature. Advertisement analysis in chapter three suggests that companies promote anxieties about the complexity and difficulty of self-building, particularly in relation to project management. Clearly self-build companies need to promote the benefit of 'turn-key' operations that provide a complete package to self-builders despite the fact that an entirely self-managed project yields higher financial and 'achievement' rewards – as the level of challenge in managing a complex project is a factor in stimulating well being.

Despite the hesitancy of some participants to provide a subjective assessment of the success of their project (Murrell and Bridgland were still involved in finishing work), the sense of personal accomplishment was tangible, expressed through immense pride in the project as well as personal satisfaction in accomplishing a difficult, time-demanding, complex and costly project. There are no statistical indicators that can be provided for the 'level' or 'improvement' rate of well being in the cases studied here and any attempt to do this would be highly problematical (as a person's sense of well being is related to a broad range of factors including hereditary, work, relationship, community and social factors). What has been shown is that self-building contains the particular features required to stimulate well being (as identified by psychologists in studies of well being), and that based on the interpretation of data collected for the study, participants have purposefully engaged with these activities and have achieved the goals of self-building as a result of considerable creative and physical work.

Conclusions

In order to assess the value of self-building against Turner's proposition it is necessary to ask how well is it possible to fully exploit the opportunities of self-building as they are currently defined. As I have suggested above there is
evidence that self-building has the capacity to stimulate individual and social well-being on a number of levels but that there are particular aspects of the process that are yet to be fully exploited and may indeed be diminished through the market appeal of turn-key operations.

It would seem that for mainstream self-builders (the 94 percent who do not employ the services of an architect and perhaps the 6 percent who do), the ability of self-building to bring about a critically reflective dialogue about the nature of housing design, self-identity and issues of locale are yet to be effectively facilitated. This statement is not made solely on the basis of research into a cluster group but on the survey of self-build company literature from the majority of companies operating in the UK.

The significance of self-building in bringing about a wider debate on the issues of contemporary house form and culture should not be under-estimated given the volume of self-build activity, the concerns of the profession (CABE and RIBA28) and design and cultural historians who advocate the ‘value’ of the ‘ordinary’ object and the role of consumers (or participants) who contribute to their creation (Miller (1998), Brand (1997), Turner (1972), Rapoport (1990), Ward (1996), Oliver, Davis and Bentley (1981) and many others).

Indeed what is significant about the self-build home and contributes to its postmodernity is that it re-defines the conventional relationship between the producer and consumer of housing design and in so doing can engage with issues of identity in a far more meaningful and precise way. It has been shown, for example, that access to knowledge and skills, and tools and processes, once the domain of professional ‘producers,’ are now available to the amateur house-builder. The interpretation of needs at some distance to users (based on a theoretical or market-led interpretation of need) collapses within the integrated process of self-building. Indeed in each of the cases discussed here, the self-builder carried the financial risk of the project (usually assigned to the developer),

28 For example, ‘Building for Life’ is a joint Government/CABE project to support new housing initiatives by addressing planning policy, the needs of home-owners and issues of design quality. A further example is ‘Building Futures,’ a joint CABE/RIBA project established in 2002 to bring about debate on the future of the built environment including socio-economic and cultural issues in relation to built form.
acted as building contractor (usually hired by the developer) and architect for the project. They were able to manage their project according to cash flow and at a rate that enabled them to learn the skills required to complete the various stages of the project. It is also the case that changes to the market in relation to the supply of construction materials and building components (AMA 2003:10) gives the amateur a far greater range of materials and therefore the possibility to interpret 'individuality' in complex ways. The specialist magazines and an array of web resources (such as Build Store) make it possible for amateurs to access professional standard materials and components that were once only accessible to professional 'producers.' Indeed a study of the self-build home brings the individual (consumer) to the centre of the interpretative practice of the historian, rather than issues of production (producers, markets and technical factors, other agents). The latter, while interesting in that they betray shifts in patterns and modes of production, become contextual and rather than determining factors within the interpretation process. Ownership of the production process makes it possible to gain an understanding of what participants perceive to be of unique importance to them in the design of their home as this study has shown.

It is a concern that the trend in self-building is towards the use of fully packaged 'turn-key' operations and that relatively few self-builders are involved in building work and project management to the same extent as the participants in this study (AMA 2003:11). Despite the emphasis in company brochures on the idea of 'bespoke' design, discussion of the exemplars and advertisement material would suggest that 'choice' exists within a certain set of popularly held 'ideals' and that these may not necessarily engage effectively with a critical debate about locale and self-identity. There is a further concern too. There is no market research available on the precise nature of the self-build population. The research conducted by AMA is 'the first to analyse the self-build sector' (AMA 2003:5) yet their evidence is based on the readership of Build-It magazine, not the actual population of self-builders. Even using this material it is not possible to gauge the participation of ethnic groups or the regional spread of self-build activity. However, statistics in the report identify a growing market (around 4 percent a year) and suggest that much of the growth will be in 'turn-key' products as this offers greater convenience to consumers.
Self-building could provide a powerful tool for grappling with the complex issues of cultural diversity, by making it possible for the design decisions of participants to be made taking into account personal biography and popularly held notions of the 'ideal' home. However this would require some intervention: new facilitation and advisory roles and networks of support, ensuring the design process stays with participants but that they possess the type of conceptualising tools necessary to exploit the expressive opportunities afforded by the self-build process.

This study has shown that the 'value' of the self-build home extends beyond the more general enhancement of knowledge and skills, becoming a symbol of lifestage and lifestyle and containing a trail of biographical information about participants. However, there are broader findings too. The study of self-building as an activity begins to articulate the nature of amateur design and the complexity and 'difficulty' of negotiating planning requirements, market forces and popular cultural attitudes to housing design with personal goals and self-identity. The study of amateur design clearly has much to offer the development of the subject of design history despite being a topic in its infancy with only the beginnings of a theoretical framework. This study has begun the process of defining amateur design by asking what type of object the self-build home is and describing the nature of self-building and the attributes it shares with other 'life-enhancing' and 'serious' amateur activities. It has also begun the process of assessing the skills of the amateur in respect to self-building and has shown that the development of specifically conceptual design skills currently stands as a barrier to more effective exploitation of the self-build process. However, despite this, the unique value of self-building (and what it can contribute to well being) has been shown to reside in the totality of the process of self-building and highlights the need to consider the integration of design with the process of making in an assessment of these, quite ordinary and extra-ordinary, objects of material culture.
Further study

As indicated above, the field of amateur design provides a fascinating opportunity to examine 'everyday life' in terms of a set of ideals, needs and aspirations and to see these translated into objects of material culture. These objects in turn provide society with insightful documents of our time providing detailed personal accounts of the complex negotiation of private as well as public expectations and values. However, the 'field' of amateur design is in its infancy and its location within design history, material culture studies, sociology and psychology deserves further consideration and far wider and cross-disciplinary study in order that its potential, particularly for what it can offer studies of cultural diversity, can be fully realised.

The research into self-building has also highlighted the emergence of new data in the form of planning policy, specifically village design statements, and these are documents worthy of further analysis in that they set out a number of aesthetic 'codes' for future building activity in their area. These will affect all forms of new housing provision, particularly those that fall within the proximity of village centres. Further research might consider the details of the statements themselves (as they are a source of 'design advice') as well as the way property developers and self-builders interpret these, alongside the needs and aspirations of householders.

Further research too is required into self-building. This should comprise a social-science study of the UK self-build population so that more is known about the range of social, ethnic and cultural groups that are participating in self-build activity as well as the spread of this activity geographically. Research should also be conducted with existing professional groups (CABE, RIBA), support networks (The Self-Build Association), architects and self-builders to better understand the type of facilitation processes that would have a positive impact on the design phase of self-build projects and to test these in a controlled way across socio-cultural and ethnic groups.
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Appendix A:
Self-Build Company Brochures
Self-Build Company Brochures

Companies used within ‘word frequency’ and ‘basic services’ and ‘customer care’ analyses

1. TJ Crump Oakwrights Limited. The lakes, Swainhill, Hereford HR7 7PU Tel: 01432 353353
2. Heritage Designs. The Old Stables, Wervil Grange, Pentregat, Llandysul, Wales SA44 6HW Tel:01239 654844
3. Maple. Unit 29, Progress Business Park, Orders Lane, Kirkham PR4 2TZ Tel: 01995 679444
4. Fleming Homes. Station Road, Duns Berwickshire, Scotland TD11 3BR Tel: 01361 883785
5. Custom Homes. Head Office, PO Box 267, Horley, Surrey RH6 9FA Tel: 01293 822898
6. Southern Timber Frame (STF). Units 2-3, Longdown Estate Yard, Deerleap Lane, Longdown, Southampton SO40 4UH Tel: 02380 293062
7. Design and Materials LTD. Lawn Road, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S81 9LB Tel: 01909 540123
8. Border Oak LTD. Kingsland Sawmills, Kingsland, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9SF Tel: 01568 708752
9. Self-Build House Company (SBHC). Crown Lodge, Cantelupe Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 3BJ Tel: 01342 312613
10. Potton. Wyboston Lakes, Great North Road, Wyboston, Bedfordshire MK44 3BA Tel: 01480 401401
11. Alpine Timber Frame. Satinstown Farm, Burwash Road, Broad Oak, Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 8RU Tel: 01435 868989
12. Taylor Lane. Chapel Road, Rotherwas Industrial Estate, Hereford HR2 6LD Tel:01432 271912
13. Scandia-Hus Limited. Courtfield, Cranston Road, East Grinstead, Sussex RH19 3YU Tel: 01342 327977
14. Viceroy Homes Limited. PO Box 28431, Edinburgh, Scotland EH4 3XL Tel: 0131 332 1765
15. Neatwood Homes LTD. Unit 6, Westwood Industrial Estate, Pontrilas, Herefordshire HR2 0EL Tel: 01981 240860

17. Chandos Timber Engineering. Medlock Saw Mills, Shaw Road, Oldham OL1 3LJ Tel: 0161 621 0221

18. Self-Build Solutions.Com LTD. 13 Manor Pound Road, Cheddington, Bedfordshire LU7 0SL Tel: 01296 661527

19. Anglo-Nordic Management LTD. 12 Suttons Business Park, Suttons Park Avenue, Reading, Berks RG6 1AZ Tel: 0845 1304080

20. Frame Homes. Station Road, Perranporth, Cornwall TR6 0LH Tel: 01872 572882

21. Cedar Self-Build Homes, PO Box 3167, Chester, CH4 OZH Tel: 01244 661048 www.cedar-self-build.com

22. The Swedish House Company. Seabridge House, 8 St Johns Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9NP Tel: 0870 770 0760

23. Thomas Mitchell Homes LTD, Southend, Thornton, Fife. KY1 4ED Tel: 01592 774088

Other Self-Build Companies

Frazer Haywood LTD, PO box 20, Robertsbridge, East Sussex. TN32 5ZE

CB Homes LTD. Hilltop Lodge, Park Road, Oulton, Tarporley, Cheshire. CW6 9BH

The Cottage Company (East Anglia) LTD. Willowview Cottage, Layer Road, Abberton, Colchester. CO5 7NH

Heritage Timber Frame LTD. Penamser Business Park, Porthmadog, Gwynedd LL49 9GB

Sterling Construction Management. www.scm-uk.co.uk

Swedish Timber Frame Houses. 36 Dean Street, Newport NP19 7FD

Huf-Haus. www.huf-haus.com

Companies used for analysis of self-build advertisements

Appendix B: Advertisement Analysis
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image Title:</th>
<th>Image Source:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressive Plane/ Mode of Expression/ Utterances</strong></td>
<td><strong>Content Plane/ What the Addressee States/ How Stated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page layout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shape, size</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure and arrangement</td>
<td>accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>font style, font size</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logos</td>
<td>accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logotypes</td>
<td>treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what the sign is/type of sign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copy</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>titles</td>
<td>accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtitles</td>
<td>treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descriptive text</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>factual text</td>
<td>what the sign is/type of sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illustrations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drawings</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>photographs</td>
<td>accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plans</td>
<td>treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sketches</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what the sign is/type of sign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>colour</td>
<td>tone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>range</td>
<td>accent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shade</td>
<td>treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tone</td>
<td>expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>arrangement</td>
<td>what the sign is/type of sign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image Title:</td>
<td>‘Maple for good design’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</strong></td>
<td><strong>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design:</strong></td>
<td>Full height A4, narrow width. 4 insert photographs on centre-left axis. Two strap-lines sit adjacent separated by a vertical rule. Three sections of copy sit in lower right-hand column. A colour strip frames the top of the page and two logos cap the top and bottom of the vertical rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page layout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape, size structure and arrangement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typography:</td>
<td>Limited range of 3 fonts used in 5 sizes. The largest is for the top strap-line, then for the type-name bottom left, then for the second strap-line and company name in lower right, then copy face, and finally the address in lower right forming the smallest type size. The font style is mainly traditional serif Times New Roman. Second strap-line is a harder sans serif font, as is the address. The logo-type capping the vertical rule is a small illustration of an arched ‘classical’ window, renaissance or later revival. The second logo in the bottom left is framed within a square box (this is represented as a ‘drawn’ box, thin line to right). The box contains an illustration of a substantial, authoritative looking classical house of renaissance or later revival. The front elevation of the house is symmetrical, with white rendering and stone detail. The logo includes the company name ‘Maple’. The logotypes combine symbol (company name) with iconic (window) and indexical (house) signs within the vocabulary of logo/logotypes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The top strap-line highlights the company name and its core value - 'good design'. The second strap-line asserts the willingness of the company to realise the goals and 'dreams' of the client. 'Design' occurs in both strap-lines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of service, 'design' as a central service concept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond a pure 'service' the company provides the emotional back-up and support needed to complete a self-build project.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company identity: Caring, paternalism. Partner with client</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client characterisation: emotional, dreaming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The copy addresses the client in a direct and personal way through repeated use of 'you', 'your' and 'our'. The copy emphasises the emotive journey of self-building through words like 'demanding', 'exciting' and 'daunting', but this is followed by reassurances of 'help', 'many years of experience', 'willing', 'able to guide', and 'safely'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of service, in terms of 'partnership' with client.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company is paternalistic (being both caring and authoritative). It sets up fears - that self-building may be hazardous - as a way to urge the clients to relinquish control and accept the authority of the professionals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The copy proposes both anxiety and reassurance to the client, it also highlights the importance of the clients own perspective but within the context of an authoritative professional service.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of service, in terms of 'professionalism'.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the client is dreaming, the company sets to work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The majestic authority and professionalism inferred within the main copy and within logo-type illustration compares starkly with the address in the lower right - the industrial and anonymous sounding 'Unit 29, Progress Business Park'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact details, functional.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sketches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four insert photographs and two illustrations (see latter in previous section). The two photos to the left are the same image, although differently framed, showing a door, and stone frame in classical style. The door is framed with bay-trees (or similar). The image to the right (upper) is an interior shot of brick fireplace in vaulted room, exposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refers to quality and standard of finish of company products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cropping images, particularly those on the left, suggest the company is capable of eccentric approaches to design and construction. This is counterpoised by the choice of illustration of company products, a house and it's interior that is styled in a traditional/vernacular way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product values: Traditional, vernacular, classical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay tree: emphasises symmetry and classical features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 'photo-story' of a recently completed house by the Maple company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That self-build need not result in 'modern'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ceiling timbers, latch door and suspended lamp. The image lower right is an exterior shot of an entire house, framed to left and top with trees and foliage. Subtle landscaping around house, no planting indicating a new construction. A large house, front or rear elevation, style in keeping with 'New England' C17 vernacular revival.

The relationship of the four images suggests they show aspects of the same house.

The house is grand in scale and style, although rusticated and vernacular. It sits in a mature plot, within which it is intended to blend over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour: Range Shade Tone Arrangement</th>
<th>Colour of photographs appear naturalistic. The logo capping the vertical rule in red and black. The strip of colour framing the top of the image is brown/red fading deep to pale. The top strap-line is in olive green, as is the company name and box in the lower section. The second strap-line is in red/brown. The remainder of the copy is in black. There is a high proportion of white background. The colours are subtle shades: neither red nor brown, ditto neither green nor brown. They are soft/natural and highlight the copy through contrast with white background rather than through size of type.</th>
<th>The idea of 'detail' as a company value.</th>
<th>solutions, as if this were an underlying anxiety. The company has the sophistication to deal with large projects and wealthy clients.</th>
<th>'modern' Company identity: Proud, confident, attention to detail</th>
<th>Product values: sophisticated Product values: natural/bespoke Client characterisation: individuality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</th>
<th>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</th>
<th>Denotive Interpretation</th>
<th>Connotative Interpretation/emotive/expressive responses</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout</strong></td>
<td>Tall narrow advertisement, nearly A4 in height, less than half page width. Information is organised down the length of the advert with the top section dedicated to the company name, strapline and illustration, a middle section highlighting the key features of the company and a lower section giving contact details. There is a clear flow and hierarchy of information from top to bottom of the page.</td>
<td>The linear and vertical arrangement of the page and well organised information conveys a sense of professionalism and control over company identity.</td>
<td>Company identity: Professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong></td>
<td>The company name is at the top of the page in large, heavy blue, serif caps. Underneath the strapline is type in smaller, black serif caps, with larger initial letter for each word. Lower middle section is a series of lighter black serif cap bullet pointed lines, beneath this a thick blue rule with white reversed type. The lower section is a combination of heavy and light caps and lowercase type giving company contact details. Use of type is controlled, the same font, albeit in different weights and sizes, is used throughout. Emphasis is gained through weight, size and colour. The majority of type is in caps, the font is sufficiently soft not to become too authoritative.</td>
<td>Use of type is restrained and controlled, using a limited number of devices to create emphasis. Bullet points are a functional device to aid communication of information and to highlight important features. A professional approach to type is used which is consistent throughout the ad. The typography conveys a sense of authority, although this is softened by a serif font, and the use of blue for the largest elements. The use of larger initial letter for the company strapline also softens the tone and treatment of the text (adds humour). The customer is provided with the reassurance of a professional company this is both assertive and capable of some subtlety in the services and products that it offers.</td>
<td>Company identity: Professional, assertive, subtlety and humour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copy</strong></td>
<td>The title at the top of the ad is the company name, beneath this is a strapline that highlights the key differential features of the company which is for 'traditional', 'oak' buildings. The bullet pointed lines provide details of the company's products and services. The product mix being broader than most self-build companies (includes garages, stables, cartsheds as well as houses). Particular house types are</td>
<td>The specific nature of the products is delivered through the copy, the majority of which appears functional and information based ('Houses' is used in contrast with 'homes'). A 'specialist' company is located around the promotion of 'traditional' styles ('New England', 'barn houses') and traditional processes ('oak framed' and 'turnkey'). Company identity is also emphasised through the quality of services and products that it provides, which is 'sympathetic'.</td>
<td>Product values: Traditional styling and processes, specialist. Company Identity: Sympathetic to clients, qualified, authoritative, paternal. Client characterisation: In need of protection.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Titles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Subtitles</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Factual text</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mentioned, 'barnhouses' and 'New England style houses'. The quality and type of services is also referred to: 'sympathetic design service', experienced skilled craftsmen' and 'flexible options'.

There is also reference to plot finding - this is highlighted within the blue rule. Lower down, contact details are given.

that is differentiated from others by virtue of the materials and process it uses, and the product mix that is available.

'experienced', 'skilled' and 'flexible'.
The company is authoritative/professional and understanding. In this sense it offers a highly paternal relationship with customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>Consists of a single illustration occupying around a third of the space. The illustration shows a front elevation of a medieval style, timber frame building, of two-storied construction. The illustration includes details of pegs and wood grain. There is little attempt at realism - details are kept to a minimum and the building is abstract in its relation to the environment in which it is placed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product values: Traditional processes, vernacular style, craftsmanship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>The illustration functions as an 'iconic' sign in that it is an abstracted characterisation of a medieval oak-framed house, and 'stands for' the type of product and style of house promoted by the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>The background colour is cream, with some typographic elements and the illustration in a soft middle blue. The majority of the typography is black, the type within the blue rule is reversed in white. The colours are soft, and range limited and restrained. The use of blue for the title at the top of the page (to soften the large font), for the illustration, bullets and rule in the lower half, provide a coherent and well balanced design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Quality is conveyed through restrained and subtle choice/use of colour balanced with authoritative uppercase typeface. Implies a company that offers a coherent, quality and efficient service for its customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Restrainted, professional - design approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Company identity: Concern for quality, authoritative, coherent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>The choice of image reinforces the specialist nature of the company and company values. Traditional is understood within the context of 'revival' vernacular architecture. In addition to style, the illustration emphasises the value the company places on traditional processes, that require 'experienced and skilled craftsmen'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td>Photographs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans</td>
<td>Sketches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</td>
<td>Content Plane/What the Addressee States/How Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout</strong>&lt;br&gt;Shape, size structure and arrangement</td>
<td>Full page advertisement. High image based content. Top image across full page width, fading away to top and bottom edge of image. Centred, below top image is a strapline; below this, in a right hand column is set three photographic images of the same size and body text which extends to the bottom of the page. The lower two thirds of the page contains a background image which fades top and right. The company logo is featured in the lower right corner of the page. A grid has been used to position the inset photographs with the body text. The image appears well balanced in that the top and bottom of the ad have a similar weight. The eye has a clear path which leads across the top of the page, left-right, and down the vertical line of the inset photographs and body text, resting on the logo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong>&lt;br&gt;Font style, font size&lt;br&gt;Logos&lt;br&gt;Logotypes</td>
<td>Given the size of the advert, there is a very modest amount of text. This is limited to a strapline in medium/large light, blue upper case sans serif type, a column of body text in small, light sans serif lower case type, some further text in small bold type beneath this and finally the logo (typographic) in medium sized, heavy sans serif type. The line spacing is proportionately, very large, adding to the sensation of space around the type and the small size of the type. Similarly, the strapline is surrounded by space which adds to the sensation that the type is very light.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The logo is surrounded by a 'swoosh' mark. This is a partial eclipse. The geometric nature of the shape and the 'tonal' sophistication given to the colour of this suggests that it is computer generated as a logo and that it acts to convey a sense of technical proficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations</th>
<th>These are full colour photographs. The top image is of a large traditional half-timber style house with steep pitch roof, traditional inset wooden door and 2/3 light timber framed window and timber bars. The house is set in wooded surrounds, it has a sweeping driveway with stone and ornamental pillars at the entrance. In the right hand column are three inset photographs showing large detached properties in various, but essentially 'old' or traditional styles. The top image is in the style of a nineteenth century double-fronted town house, the second appears to be more like a school house and has an oriel and a series of arched windows. The third image is of a traditional stone cottage/farmhouse. The image in the lower section of the advert is the largest and most significant in many ways. It is the image that supports the narrative within the body text and supports the core values of the company. Unusually this is a photograph of an interior (the guest room), which fades out to the top and right. It features a girl asleep on a traditional chaise-long, a Golden Labrador at the foot of the chaise-long, cushions, story books and the headdress of her costume scattered around. The rest of the furniture and ornaments in the room are nineteenth century.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>A completed Potton home given here as an example Further examples of completed Potton projects showing the diversity of styles and materials available within the Potton range. The use of 'fading' in photographic texts is often used to denote romance and is conventionally used within wedding and formal portraits (particularly of pets and small children). Its use here may have a similar function, to create a romantic scene. The sleeping child provides a symbol of innocence as well as an iconic sign for dreaming. The Labrador provides a symbol of domestic protection. The Victoriana acts as a degree of consistency, being of a minimalist and modest nature. The company has a clear and consistent identity associated with functional, technological sophistication and design consciousness. Potton has the capability to work on large and prestigious projects and has at its disposal a wide range of style options for clients. The company wishes to capture and convey to clients the romantic lifestyle quality of homes and does this through the myth of the Victorian middle class home. Potton wishes to establish its products in relation to the more abstract values of comfort, security and protection. Indeed the protection of the innocence of sleeping children is one of the most powerful narrative devices through which to convey these values. Symbolised here through the Labrador and the notion of the guest bedroom but transferred onto the larger entity of the house/home through the copy and other photographs within the advert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potton</td>
<td>Product values: Comfort, security, protection Company identity: Reassurance, protection, paternal, nostalgic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/ Mode of Expression/ Utterances</td>
<td>Content Plane/ What the Addresser States/ How Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page layout shape, size structure and arrangement</td>
<td>Approx ½ A4 size (landscape). Arranged with top strapline, left-hand column of text and copy at lower edge of the page forming a semi-circular frame. Inside the frame and focal point of the image is a large illustration. Logotype is positioned top right. The information is organised according to a simple hierarchy of information, and in terms of chromatic emphasis. There is symmetry above and below central horizontal axis – a band of gray across the middle section is achieved through the illustration and the copy in the left-hand column.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>typography font style, font size logos logotypes</td>
<td>Top strapline in heavy, large, bold, blue, lower case font. Capital letter used only for first word. Logo-type positioned at end of strapline. The logo is a typographic solution depicting the capital initial letters of each word of the company name. The letters are in light serif font in two colours against a three colour background. The colour arrangement of foreground and background is complex. Column of text to left of image has one sentence in middle-size lower case bold letters, the rest of the column is in small, light, lowercase text. The latter achieves tonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy titles</td>
<td>Strapline has clear interpersonal function through the use of 'you’ve' and the informal and conversational 'found the plot'. Humorous play on the word 'plot' accentuates this. 'You, you’re' used on 7 occasions through the text, and there is an emphasis on action-based phrases such as 'you've found', 'time to call', 'call us today'. Phrases like 'choice', pick features, 'start from scratch' emphasises the pro-activity of clients. The company name is given on four occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations drawings photographs plans sketches</td>
<td>Hand-drawn b/w illustration of front elevation of traditional styled house. Background is sketched in to the left, right and above. The house is a large, detached property in classical/Georgian revival style. Clad in rough-cast cement, stone features to corners and lintels, brick or tiled buttress chimney and tiled pitch roof. Front elevation has a central gable, classical style pilasters. A fire is lit inside and generates smoke from the chimney. Small leaded lights to symmetrical arrangement of windows. On the company’s website, this house is called ‘Esher Park’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour range</td>
<td>Pale cream background, blue strapline at top of image. Grey/white across wide horizontal band. Black text and black logotype (with elements of purple and white). Majority of image has even/soft tonal qualities. The heavier tones are generated by bold copy at top and bottom of the page. These help to 'frame' the image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone arrangement</td>
<td>function (in that it represent a house pattern offered by the company), but it is also functions as an iconic sign for the range and type of homes the company promotes as its product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</td>
<td>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout</strong></td>
<td>Quarter, portrait page advertise. Top section laid-out in two columns with company logo in left and quotation in right hand column. The largest, middle section is devoted to box containing a hand drawn illustration. Beneath this is a smaller horizontal band and at the bottom of the page a further wider band in lime green. The advert is organised around a series of horizontal sections. The page is read left to right across the top band, and then in linear vertical sequence through the remaining sections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong></td>
<td>The logotype in the top left section comprises the company name in large blue, light serif lowercase font which is underscored with a lime green rule. Beneath the underscore is the remainder of the full company name in small blue, light serif uppercase font. It is light to the point that it has fragmented. Topping the 'I' is a graphic foliage device in pale and lime green. The graphic foliage device is repeated in a lower section. On the right hand side is a quotation in small blue, sans serif font. The last few words are in caps. In the bottom sections are contact details, the font is similar to that used in the top right section but in a combination of bold, uppercase and lowercase letters. The type is blue, and reversed in white in the bottom section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illustrations</strong></td>
<td>This consists of a hand drawn/coloured picture of a large detached house in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs Plans Sketches</td>
<td>traditional half-timber/cottage style. There are decorative corner bricks, plinth and window surrounds. The windows have small leaded lights. There is an external brick chimney. The house is set in what appears to be a countryside setting, there are no other buildings and the foliage around seems mature. There is a path leading to the front door which is planted to either side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour Range Shade Tone Arrangement</td>
<td>This is a full-colour advertisement. Unusually, there is no black text. There is white space around the text and illustrations, and text in the lower section is reversed in white. The remainder of the text is in medium blue. The logo/symbol is also in pale green and lime green as well as the underscore. The use of lime green and medium blue, and the amount of white in the image gives the advert a fresh, light feel. The colours in the illustration are again 'high key', particularly the use of bright yellow in the garden, for foliage and trees, and the use of red for roof tiles, brick and flowers in the foreground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural, Rusticated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contrast with the use of green elsewhere. However, the yellow is particularly 'sunny', 'sunflower' in shade. A colour associated with happiness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</th>
<th>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</th>
<th>Denotative Interpretation</th>
<th>Connotative Interpretation/emotive/expressive responses</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout</strong></td>
<td>Quarter page, portrait advertisement. Organised around a thin column to the left-hand side and three horizontal sections to the right of this. The company name and logo are placed vertically along the narrow strip, to the right of this at the top of the page is a white band containing a strapline, beneath this in a larger section is a colour photograph and beneath this in a still larger section is set the copy and in the bottom right-hand corner are two trade/quality marks. Both the narrow vertical strip and the large lower section have a heavy green background with the copy reversed in white. The same green is used in the top section for the strapline. The advert is read from bottom to top up the narrow strip, and top to bottom through the vertical sequence of the right-hand sections. The trade/quality marks act as a full-stop and resting place for the eye.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The layout is bold and highly structured. The dark/lower sections adds to the weight of the advert, giving way to a sensation of authority.</td>
<td>Company identity: Authoritative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong></td>
<td>The company name is in large, light serif uppercase font stretching the height of the advert. This is capped by the logo which consists of a graphic of two classical columns and triangular pediment with the company name overlaying this and beneath in caps. The graphic device is in sandstone yellow, the type is in blue/grey. The strapline consists of three lines, each having a different font. The first a medium lowercase serif, the second a medium serif upper case, the third a large bold lowercase serif font preceded by a decorative ‘hyphen’.</td>
<td>Gives prominence to company name and provides a distinctive company identity. Iconic sign for classical architecture. Differentiates each line and provides a decorative heading to the advertisement.</td>
<td>The serif fonts used throughout the advert softens the boldness of the layout and contributes some decorative elements. The use of green and white again softens the bold and heavy emphasis of the dark green sections. The large font size for the company name and the third element of the strapline ‘your life’, gives these components equal weight and importance. The importance of these components is further emphasised by contrast with the very small type in the bottom section. The use of three fonts for the</td>
<td>Company identity: historical, classical, authority, coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Titles Subtitles Descriptive text Factual text</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The strapline addresses the client directly through the use of 'you' on three occasions. Reference is made to two functional client issues 'site' and 'budget', and one emotive/personal issue 'life'. The size of the font used to express 'your life' is to give this factor a greater weight than the other two (put together). The copy in the lower section again addresses the audience in a direct way through 'you' and 'your'. The nature of the service is expressed through 'very personal', 'flexible', 'expertise and experience' and in relation to the product 'assurance of quality'. The copy also asserts the ability of the company to 'turn your dreams ... into reality'. The quality of the product is highlighted through the copy and through reference to a quality standard number. The quality of the company's products is further supported by the trade/quality marks in the bottom right corner. Use of 'you' as an interpersonal device. And 'site', 'budget' as functional factors, and 'life' as emotive factor. The company balances the importance of practical issues over emotive ones, providing reassurances on cost, site issues and quality on the one hand, and the ability to provide a home which is 'individual' fits your 'life' and 'turns your dreams...into reality'. The company values it's relationships with clients and seeks to provide a personal, flexible and user centred service. The company places itself in a position of power (the ability to turn dreams into reality), professionalism and paternalism (expertise and experience), in relation to the client. Combined with an emphasis on quality and standards, the company is perceived to provide clients with a high level of security.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustrations Drawings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| This consists of one full colour photograph of a large detached house in Fleming home. Denotes a completed type of home available through the

| Figure 7 |

| 233 |
| Photographs | Plans | Sketches | company, and the scale and cost of project the company has experience handling.  
The view of the rear of the property demonstrates the lifestyle of company products – the conservatory, patio area and lawn are signifiers of completion, relaxation. They offer lifestyle values and a sense of living-in and enjoying home.  
Product values: Lifestyle, relaxation, conviviality |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colour</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Shade</td>
<td>Tone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Full colour advertisement. Besides the photograph, the colours are limited to a heavy green for the majority of the background and white in the top section. The logo introduces subtle colours sandstone and blue/grey. The type is in the same heavy green, or reversed in white. The surface of the building in the photograph has a white cement surface, other colours appear naturalistic. | The sandstone yellow in the logotype may denote the use of this material in historical buildings and particular regions. | The colours in the logo add a decorative quality to the advert. The heavy green used for the background adds solidity and seriousness to the image. The dark background highlights the copy, particularly the company name.  
The white background in the top section and the white cement cladding of the building provide a necessary and strong contrast to the dark background elsewhere.  
The strength of the contrast in the image conveys a serious and authoritative company identity. | Company identity: Serious/authoritative |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressive Plane/ Mode of Expression/ Utterances</th>
<th>Content Plane/ What the Addresser States/ How Stated</th>
<th>Denotative Interpretation</th>
<th>Connotative Interpretation/ Emotive/ Expressive responses</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout:</strong> shape, size structure and arrangement</td>
<td>Approx half page landscape advert laid out using three columns. The first on the left-hand side is the widest, occupying more that half the page, split horizontally with the upper section showing a drawing and the lower section containing strapline and copy. The second column is also split in the same way, the top half containing further copy, the lower half containing the company logo and company contact details. The third column on the right-hand side is a thinner strip, containing further copy. The advert is structured left to right, with the eye resting on the final column, which is given further weight due to its colour. There are three elements depicted in red, left, middle and middle-right. The eye darts to and fro over these. The image is balanced left and right through the use of a heavy green for both the illustration on the left-hand and the background of the right-hand column.</td>
<td>left-right reading of the page is conventional, but aided through the use of column/grid and use of colour/tone.</td>
<td>The use of a grid to establish three columns and a central axis for the first two columns creates a system for the organisation of information and an impression of coherence. The logical reading of the page from left to right is supported by the use of red elements across the width of the page. The page is anchored by a heavy green column on the right. A sense of balance and reliability is generated through these devices.</td>
<td>Company Identity: coherent reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography:</strong> font style, font size logos logotypes</td>
<td>Across the top-left corner of the page is a banner in red, with price details reversed in cream. The text across the banner is a combination of uppercase and bold, with an asterisk and line of very small type in parenthesis. Below the middle section of the first column is the strapline ‘the affordable house’ in very large lowercase red serif font. the double ‘£’ sign as a decorative device. Indexical sign for a ‘sale’ banner, both in its position on the page and colour. Has decorative and symbolic function. The use of the ‘£’ sign as a decorative device</td>
<td></td>
<td>The use of typographic elements is highly varied. There is a fairly large volume of text on the page, hence the need for small type. The line spacing is inconsistent across the three columns and there is an assortment of lower, upper case, type size and colour of text. None of the text is in</td>
<td>Company Identity: relaxed informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>copy:</strong></td>
<td>symbolic sign 'E' and there is a decorative 'dash' preceding the last line. Beneath this is a section of copy in small grey/brown lowercase serif font, the title line is slightly larger and in green. In the top half of the middle section is a block of text in very small grey/brown lower case serif type, the title line is larger in green. Beneath this is a title line in red leading to the company logo and address and contact details. A combination of the same very small and middle size type is used. The logo type is of a decorative banner creating a semi-circular shape with pleated ribbon forming the lower panel. Inside the circular shape is a display of oak leaves and acorns. Around the circular banner and in the lower panel in uppercase serif font is the company name. The text in the top section of the right-hand column is middle size uppercase serif font, followed by very small text in lowercase serif font.</td>
<td>brings some attention to the advert and supports the emphasis in the text about the 'affordability' of the product. The use of a decorative banner in circular fashion is suggestive of protecting the thing contained inside, the thing inside (oak leaves). The use of oak leaves is a direct, graphic link with the company name and the construction materials used for company products. The banner material is suggestive of ribbon, which is decorative and associated with the packaging of expensive and luxurious goods. (Oak being a precious commodity and in need of protection.)</td>
<td>black, so despite the volume of text, this does not feel overbearing. Typographic emphasis is placed across the middle horizontal section of the advert, through the large red strapline, followed in sequence by the company logo. The company's products are high quality and are of a precious nature.</td>
<td>Product Values: quality, precious competitively priced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>titles</strong></td>
<td>The copy comprises a number of elements. In the far left corner is a sale banner showing a price (and other product details). The strapline in the left hand column provides the narrative, linking the sale banner (and the low price of the product (£23.35)), with the illustration of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>subtitles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>descriptive text</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>factual text</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the product. It is the central focus/theme of
the advert (owing to the size and
placement of the strapline). Beneath the
strapline is a section of copy, the title
emphasising 'A Return To Basics'. The
rest of the copy enlarges on this theme,
placing both the company and its building
techniques within a tradition. 'Time-proven
designs', 'craft and vernacular tradition',
'ancient oak' are used to emphasise the
specialist nature of company products and
to demonstrate to clients that the company
and its methods have a track record of
success. Reference is also made to the
fact that the methods are 'regionally
situated' - 'Herefordshire on the Welsh
Marches'. This section of copy describes
the 'values' and 'identity' of company
products.

In the top section of the second column is a
further section of copy with the company
name as the title. This section of copy
describes in more precise terms the service
provided by the company to the client, but
again stresses the nature of the product
'authentic oak framed structures' and the
facts that this can be done cheaply - 'at an
unbeatable price'. The quality of the
product is referred to by reference to
'classic', and the relevance of the product
to 'the needs of the 21st century' reassures
clients that they can combine a modern
lifestyle within a house that has a traditional
appearance.

The company name highlights the
specialist nature of this self-build company.

The copy in the third column has a more
direct tone. The use of uppercase type for

| 'Basics' refers here to
'simple/straightforward' but also to 'doing things as they
have been done before', to traditional techniques and
methods.

'Craft' denotes a method of
production that does not use
mass production and mechanical techniques, but
instead relies on hand-skills, unique or small batch
production.

Vernacular tradition refers to
local and ordinary (known to trades and community)
methods and techniques - in this case oak frame
construction within Herefordshire.

'Classic' denotes
timelessness, where the
value of a thing is sustained
over time.

countered with a high volume
of text emphasising a range of
product values that are not usually
associated with budget prices -
such as craft, quality, authenticity
and so on.

The fact that so much emphasis is
placed on dispelling this concern,
highlights the central anxiety for
the company - that their products
will be thought to occupy the
expensive extreme of the self-
build market.

A further, although far less
significant anxiety, is the idea that
traditional houses might only be
attractive to clients wishing an old
fashioned lifestyle, or that
traditionally conceived houses
may not cater well for modern
living.

The familiar device of stating the
authority of the company and its
'qualification' (through experience)
is intended to provide clients with
the reassurance of a professional
service that can deliver on quality.

authenticity
value for money
regional
classical

Company Anxieties:
perceived as expensive/
'up-market'
perceived as 'old fashioned'

Company Identity:
qualified
professional
quality
<p>| Illustrations:                       | This comprises a single 'drawn' illustration of a 'traditional' timber frame house. The use of panel in-fills and rendering makes visible the wood frame (in 16th century style) the lower section of the house is clap-boarded. The chimney, windows, roof etc are consistent in their fit with the style of the building. It is a large detached house. There is planting to the front and large trees behind. Sunlight is reflected across the roof. | Provides an iconic and indexical sign for company products as it both represents a finished Border Oak home and stands for a range of company products. The 'hand' rendered drawing supports the craft values described within the copy and provides an image that has space for the imagination of the audience (unlike a photograph that it overtly realistic). | The illustration provides the most immediate source of information about the nature of this self-build company and the type of products it specialises in offering. It does this through the style of the house in the illustration, but also through the vehicle of the illustration itself, which is 'hand rendered' - but not in fine detail, so it has the appearance of a woodcut or lithograph, a traditional craft method of printing. | Product Values: traditional specialist crafted Company Identity: offers specialist product |
| range | There are four colours used in the ad. The background colour of the first two columns is a rich cream, over which is a mid-heavy green (woodland green) for the illustration and certain elements of text. Red is used on three occasions, for the banner across the top-left corner, for the strapline, and to head the text in the lower half of the middle column. A grey/brown is used for the majority of the text in these sections and for the logo and company address (which is set on a white background). The background for the strip in the right-hand |
| Symbolic/iconic sign referencing woodland - trees-oak leaves. | The combination of cream and woodland green work in very traditional ways, they are not associated with contemporary decorative schemes, but might easily be found (as a combination) within 'heritage' colour ranges and schemes. In combination these colours offer a sensation of warmth and security. | Company Identity: heritage traditional security warmth |
| colour: | |
| shade | |
| tone arrangement | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Column is the mid-heavy green, the text is reversed in cream.</td>
<td>The use of red adds a dynamic quality to an add that would otherwise be essentially calm. It both makes the eye dart about over the page, and allows information on the page to 'stand out' or 'shout'. Within a competitive 'image' environment this is a useful device for getting the company's products noticed. The use of green and the grey/brown for the text helps to soften the impact of the high quantity of text on the page.</td>
<td>Company Anxieties: increasingly competitive market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</td>
<td>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</td>
<td>Denotative Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>page layout shape, size structure and arrangement</strong></td>
<td>Full A4 advertisement divided into two columns. At the top of the page is a strapline, at the bottom to the left is a wide solid band. In the left-hand column is the company logo, followed by a number of paragraphs of text-based information. The right hand column features a series of five inset photographs and a quote. The arrangement is strongly vertical. A notional grid is used to arrange the information using the middle/vertical axis. However, the strapline is arranged as a series of three words (requiring three columns) and the subtitle is centred, while the rest of the text is aligned left. The inset photographs have a haphazard relationship to each other and to the central axis. Three photographs appear to be cropped by the size of the page. The coherence of the image is disrupted as a consequence of these features.</td>
<td>The design is suggestive of a 'mood board' used in the design process to 'paste-up' images and text as reference points for the design. This is emphasised by the over-lapping of images with others and with the block containing the copy on the left-hand side. The cropping of the images also gives the sensation of the image being hastily put together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>typography font style, font size logos logotypes</strong></td>
<td>The strapline at the top of the page is in very large, capital, sans-serif letters, each word hyphenated by a large bullet point. Underneath is a subtitle in smaller, capital, italicised type. A number of fonts of different style and size are used within the company logo. All of which are lighter, and lower case with the exception of the company name. A small, lower case body text font is used throughout the left-hand column. The first section is in bold, the rest in lighter weight. Bullet-pointed headings appear at the top of each paragraph in larger lower case letters, the initial letter of each word is in upper case. Two lines of medium lower case text, white reversed onto orange are set in the wide band at the bottom of the column. In the middle of the right hand column is a quote.</td>
<td>The type and size of font used in the strapline demands our attention. Depict the key messages of the company and other pieces of information in descending order of priority. The use of quotation brings the 'voice' of the company closer to the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>That the company values its relationships with clients, is direct and accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy titles</td>
<td>Subtitles</td>
<td>Descriptive text factual text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strapline communicates features of strategic importance, and these relate to the product rather than the company – ‘quiet, warm, solid’. Other important aspects of the company’s products relate to method ‘traditional’ and materials ‘masonry’. Within the company logo, a set of values that relate to the client and to company values are expressed ‘complete’, ‘package’, and ‘quality, value, choice’. The inclusion of the date the company was established is a common device in much sales literature, but may be unusual in ‘young’ industries such as self-build. Interpersonal functions are varied: ‘our’ in the first paragraph, ‘we’, in the quotation, and ‘you/your’ in the fifth paragraph. Three of the six paragraphs are dedicated to information about technical standards and issues such as noise, insulation and fire resistance, and three paragraphs are dedicated to customer services, such as ‘choice’, ‘bespoke design’ and ‘partnerships’. The quotation in the right hand column adds anchorage to the images, asserting the ‘beauty’ of their products and their desire to work in partnership with clients. The text at the bottom of the page is action-based, and introduces more playful language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates the particular qualities of D&amp;M products over timber frame competitors. The strapline confirms that the company uses ‘traditional’ methods of construction and that these have benefits (insulation and solidity) over timber frame products. Asserts that the company has a history and a reputation for self-building. That the company stands for particular values including working in partnership with clients. D&amp;M products offer greater noise insulation than timber frame products. The company is confident about the quality of its products and effective working relations with clients. Taps into consumer worries about noise pollution. This is the principal message in the first paragraph of text.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company anxieties: Products perceived as less well insulated than competitor products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company identity: Professional, reliable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client characterisation: Active participants, anxious about noise pollution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variety of typographic approaches may indicate (as suggested above) a limited investment in the design of communication material. However, variety may also act as a metaphor for the range of visual treatments and types of property available to clients.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product values: Flexibility and variety of treatments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D &amp; M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Illustrations, drawings, photographs, plans |
| These consist of five full colour photographic inserts and one illustration situated within the company logo. The photographs are of completed |
| Represents the variety of materials, styles and treatments available through the company products. |
| Demonstrates the capability of the company to work with wealthy clients and to large budgets as well as more modest ones. |
| Company identity: Professional capability, credible |

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<p>| sketches | company products, of varying style. Four of the five depict 'traditional homes': the first being a modern version of a Georgian style, the second and third refer to regional/rural revivals and the fifth, a modern half-timbered, that refers to revivals of medieval architecture. The fourth image refers to 'contemporary mid-century' style of bungalow. All the properties are large, detached and set within what appear to be large or mature plots. Materials are highly varied, ranging from stone, cement, brick, timbering, tile and slate. The image within the logo is a hand-drawn colour illustration of a traditional house in a country setting. The image sits within an oval frame. The house has a number of decorative features in brick or stone, chimney and ridge tiles. The door is set in deep to the house with a path leading away from this. The house has a very steep and low roof, with dormer window set within it. Blue sky and mature trees surround the house. Represents illustrations of company products and successful projects completed for previous clients. Represents the range of styles that are common within the company's portfolio. The company has experience with larger scale budgets and has completed prestigious projects. The company's product allows the clients to achieve a variety of styles using many different treatments. This is the type of house that typifies company products - large, traditional, detached villa in suburban or country-side location. Provides credibility through the ability to reference a number of successful projects. Traditional styles are popular with clients. The company has a track record of completed projects that are varied and sometimes impressive in scale - they can be trusted to deliver prestigious outcomes. This is the type of house that typifies 'home' and its associated qualities of comfort and safety. It is expressive (as it uses a craft medium) and as such offers a more romantic interpretation of home than the photographic images provide. This is expressive of home where as the photographic images are illustrative of the products the company has built for previous clients and which are available to future clients. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| colour range shade tone arrangement | This is a full-colour advertisement. An orange/terracotta in solid and half tone combinations is used for the strapline. This colour is used throughout the page to depict headings and bullet points. It is used in a block in the bottom left-hand section of the page to balance the block of the same colour used in the upper right-hand corner. The background colour for the text on the left-hand side of the page is a dense cream colour. This appears complementary to the orange/terracotta – this too is a warm and comforting colour. The remaining page is set on to a white background. The colour is especially 'earthy' perhaps representative of brick, tile, other clay materials. The colour is warm – of fired earth – and adds emphasis to the message that traditional construction materials provide homes that are well insulated and warm. | Product values: Traditional styling Product values: Sophisticated, prestigious Product values: Welcoming, romantic, comforting | Product values: Warmth, comforting |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The majority of the copy is black.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The green is used for the type encircling the company logo and the copy in the bottom left corner is reversed onto cream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression Utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page layout</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Copy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Titles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtitles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>does this better than other products. 'Saving' reinforces a basic customer service (cost) and 'houses' rather than 'houses' emphasises the qualitative over the functional process of self-building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The copy in middle right of page acknowledges the architects of the featured home – this may have been a requirement of the architectural company, serving both as self-advertisement and protection of copyright. Lower copy serves to highlight importance of company name, and to provide contact details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost savings and running-cost efficiencies to consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>energy. Sensation of company honesty in it's acknowledgement of the limitations of the services it provides. It would appear not to provide 'design' services or promote itself as specialists in aesthetic decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect designed homes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledgement of architects also removes 'ownership' of architectural tyle of the featured home away from self-build company, leaving the latter in more functional and less aesthetic role. This is a subtle but significant positioning exercise (differentiation of font size).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colour Range</th>
<th>The background colour is a deep middle green. Typography and quality logo are reversed in white. The photographs are full colour.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shade Tone</td>
<td>This type of green is a symbol for many ‘ecological’ products and services and emphasises the energy efficiency of Taylor Lane homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrangement</td>
<td>Full colour photographs convey the realism and functional purpose they have in relation to company and product quality and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The background colour doesn’t attempt to be quirky or unconventional. It’s very ordinariness conveys a lack of pretension on the part of the company. Its possible reference to ‘eco’ values is anchored by strapline copy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company identity: Unpretentious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Product values: Functional, environment friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive Plane/Mode of Expression/Utterances</td>
<td>Content Plane/What the Addresser States/How Stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page Layout</strong></td>
<td>Narrow strip advertisement, nearly full page in length and just under half page width. The company logotype is centred at the top of the page with strapline beneath. Below this are six boxes arranged in two columns, six of which feature photographs, and one text. A large box sits in the lower/top part of the advert featuring type reversed in white. At the bottom of the page there is centred text providing company details. There are two background colours, one a light grey/purple, the other a dark brown. Both background colours feature a marbled 'paint effect'. The image is arranged in a vertical linear sequence from top to bottom. The information is arranged within sections/boxes rather than through use of a grid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typography</strong></td>
<td>The company logotype consists of a large pale green decorative capital 'H', with shadow effect to the font. Overlaid on this is the company name 'Heritage', in a smaller blue decorative font, also with shadow effect. Beneath this in light black serif uppercase in 'designs' with green underscore. There is an early twentieth century (possibly 20s) feel to the fonts used within the logotype, acting as a symbol for heritage. The strapline is in medium/large blue bold uppercase letters with white shadow. In the centre box in the right column is smaller bold uppercase text reversed in white. In the large box in the lower half of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Heritage Designs*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copy Titles Subtitles Descriptive text Factual text</th>
<th>The 'Heritage' company name. Coupled with 'design', the company associates itself with products that use patterns drawn from buildings of historical value. The strapline emphasises that the company makes the timber frames. The text in the right column box establishes the place of the company in relation to competitors, in terms of being 'leaders' and therefore, offering cost advantages. 'The chance to own the home of your dreams' places the emotive alongside the practical advantage of using Heritage products. The list of bullet points set out the customer services provided by the company. These are mainly in terms of 'hard' services and 'cost' factors ('wall construction', 'free planning') but also include 'care' services such as design, flexibility and architectural services. The text at the bottom of the page gives full company contact details.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function as information</td>
<td>Uses the word-symbol heritage to denote buildings of historical value. Denotes the beginning of the supply chain and hence can reduce costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishes to demystify the process of</td>
<td>Company identity and values combine those of quality (heritage), with those of cost efficiency, with the assurance of professionalism (leaders in the field). The company also maintains that they can help people realise a home of their dreams, affording the company special powers. Service level details are provided in competitive terms 'free in-house design', 'free planning' etc. The company seeks to attract clients that are looking for cost advantage but with the security of quality that would be provided through 'heritage' patterns and architectural models.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Illustrations These consist of five photographs of the Heritage Designs

Figure 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawings</th>
<th>same size of homes in various stages of completion. They appear to be of different properties and illustrate well the way a timber frame house is built. The lower right image is a traditional red brick design, low pitch roof and timber window frames. The properties featured are ordinary in scale (certainly not grand). The photograph of the house nearest to completion shows a neighbouring house within the frame, again demonstrating modest projects/plot sizes.</th>
<th>and demonstrates the process of timber frame building.</th>
<th>building using a timber frame system. Graphic and factual in conveying this information to clients. Un glamorous in presentation. Seeks to attract clients for projects of more modest scale. Seeks to attract clients on cost/competitive factors.</th>
<th>Partnership with client: Company identity: Unsophisticated, not lifestyle led</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>Colour Range Shade Tone Arrangement</td>
<td>These consist of two background colours, plus pale green within the logotype, blue, white and black lettering. The colours within the logotype emphasise the decorative and designerly function of the logotype within company publicity. The background colour incorporates a paint effect, working as an iconic sign for company products. The white text against a dark background highlights the importance of this information over that at the bottom of the page. The use of dark brown boxes also serves to break up the different elements of the layout and emphasises their different functions.</td>
<td>Despite the dated nature of the paint effect it establishes information about the company, in terms of home 'design', that the photographs alone don't fully succeed in establishing.</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Identity</td>
<td>Company Anxieties</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional, qualified, reliable, proud</td>
<td>modern</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confident, robust, assertive, authoritative coherence, serious</td>
<td>perceived as expensive, upmarket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>straightforward, self-effacing</td>
<td>perceived as 'old fashioned'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unfussy, unpretentious, unsophisticated</td>
<td>increasingly competitive market</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sympathetic, paternal, caring, partnership with client, protective, security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrity, honesty, trustworthy, credible relaxed, informal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tradition, heritage, conservative, classical, historical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>technological specialist</td>
<td>design conscious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calm, warm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Characterisation</td>
<td>Product Values</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional</td>
<td>classical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anxious about noise pollution</td>
<td>warm, relaxing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dreaming</td>
<td>welcoming, comforting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traditional styles</td>
<td>reassuring, security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individuality</td>
<td>protection, conviviality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intelligent, equal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cost efficiency, competitive pricing</td>
<td>dream home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active participants</td>
<td>lifestyle, nostalgic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>romantic, authentic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sophisticated, aspirational, precious, prestigious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>energy efficient, cost saving, quality, competitively priced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>modernist (form and function), functional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>specialist, bespoke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C:
Word Exercise
Bridgland: Word Exercise
Figure 18

Laidlaw: Word Exercise
Appendix D:
Interview Preparation
**Study of Self-Build Homes**

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the study. To give you a bit of background – I am a PhD student living in Farnham and the subject of my thesis is Self-Build Homes. It is a fascinating subject that attempts to understand how people go about designing their own home and what they achieve as a consequence of self-building. Every home is unique, but the self-build home offers self-builders greater potential to design a home that more closely suits their needs and lifestyle. I need to talk to self-builders to find out what it means to design and build a home.

I am looking for ten participants willing to fill in this form and take part in an interview. All information that you give me will be kept confidential and anonymous within the study.

**Self-builder Profile**

1. **Name of first occupant:**

2. **Male** □ 3. **Female** □ 4. **Age** □

5. **Name of second occupant:**

6. **Male** □ 7. **Female** □ 8. **Age** □ 9. **Relation to first occupant:**

10. **Details of any other occupants (children, relatives etc)**

11. **Occupation of first occupant:**

12. **Occupation of second occupant:**

13. **Please describe your cultural, religious, ethnic background:**

First occupant: ____________________________ Second occupant: ____________________________
Project Profile

14. Address of property: 

15. Start date: 

16. Completion date: 

17. Cost of project: 

Land cost: 

Build cost: 

Current valuation: 

18. Construction Method: 

Timber Frame: Yes ☐ No ☐ 

Traditional construction: Yes ☐ No ☐ 

Name of self-build company/building firm? 

Did you use an architect? Yes ☐ No ☐ 

19. Describe your level of involvement in the project: 

First occupant: 

Second occupant: 

Contact Details: 

Home telephone: 

Work telephone: 

Mobile: 

Email: 

When is a good time to call?
Interview Structure

Why Self-Build

Basic requirements

Size of house/number of beds
Size of plot
Location (town/region, also rural/urban, remote/connected, and other requirements – transport links, near family, near work etc)
To meet what kind of lifestyle, needs, aspirations
Talk through plan of home/plot

Finding the right company

How was this done
What was important in the choice of company/method
Magazines, company brochures, self-build shows etc – were these influential
What level of package/service was contracted

Finding the right home

Word set exercise (using a set of word cards, describe the important qualities in the design of the home)
What type of home (detached, semi, bungalow, etc)
What style of home (Victorian, Modern, Deco, Traditional Cottage, Contemporary etc). Why this style, what does it offer
What has influenced the style of home (personal interests, personal background, magazines, media, other homes, literature/fiction, childhood homes, holiday homes etc)

Designing the home

How was this done
Were designers, architects involved
Were sketches, photographs, illustrations, models, CAD used
Was it a short, long, difficult, enjoyable process
Were ideas added as the project progressed

Project outcome

What aspects of the design have been particularly successful
What aspects of the design were not so successful (are any changes/alterations planned)
Does the home express your lifestyle, needs and aspirations
What elements of the home particularly express these things
Is this your ideal/dream home
What skills/knowledge were gained
Appendix E: Typicality of Cases
Typicality of Case Studies

Derivation of Indicators

Indicators have been derived from the AMA (2003) report *The UK Self-Build Housing Market*. In the report a number of graphs are provided to describe the market for self-building including information on the profile of self-build participants. However, the AMA report derives its statistical information from research conducted with readers of Build-IT magazine, not from the self-build population, which may be at variance with the profile of actual self-build participants.

The AMA report provides indicators based on average land/build costs. However, these have not been referred to below as the AMA report indicates that there are significant regional variations offering sharp contrasts in land costs particularly. Significant inflation in land costs since the completion of the projects detailed in the case-studies for the thesis would further prevent comparisons to be made against findings in the AMA Report.

The AMA report uses the 'social class scale' used in marketing research (details are given below). This is based on and limited by the notion of the 'head of household's occupation.' It does not account for the 'combined' occupations/social group of the household and is usually based on the oldest male member of the household.

Like for like comparison with data derived from case-studies within the thesis is therefore problematic. For example, in the category for age, data is recorded for the case-studies within age bands that represent the average age of the participants (combined) rather than that of the 'head of the household' as it is in the AMA report.

Where the AMA report asserts the most typical (i.e. the number of bedrooms) but does not present others in the scale to least typical, a reasoned deduction has been made to quantify the other indicators in the scale (in the case of bedrooms, the least typical is reasonably assumed to be one-bedroom).

Where there are only two categories (i.e. children under 16) a binary score mechanism is used (2=no, 4=yes).

It should be noted that the indicator for children under 16 is highly ambiguous as negative response to this indicator in the AMA report may indicate that a household has no children or that a household has no children under 16. 10 percent of respondents did not provide a response to the question in the AMA report.

The AMA report provides the following data as indicators of typicality:

- Most typical dwelling size as number of bedrooms: 4
- Most typical type of dwelling: detached
- Most typical to least typical social group: B: 34% A: 29% C1: 13% C2: 13% Other: 11%
- Most typical to least typical age group: 35-44: 35% 25-34: 27% 45-54: 20% 55-64: 13% other: 5%
- Percent with children under the age of 16: householders with no children under 16: 57% householders with children under 16: 33% not stated: 10%
- Least typical build type: complete construction: 8%
Typicality based on reference data

Rating score: 1= least typical: 4= most typical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rating/indicators</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>type of dwelling</td>
<td>terraced/semi detached</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>detached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>build type</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>complete-construct</td>
<td>turnkey</td>
<td>part-construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number of bedrooms</td>
<td>one</td>
<td>two</td>
<td>three</td>
<td>four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social group</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>C1/C2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>35-44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children under 16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Profile of most typical self-builder using reference data: highest rating 24

Detached, four-bedroom dwelling where the participant has been actively involved in the construction process (through management, co-ordination or building activities). The participant represents social group B (belonging to middle-class and having a professional occupation); has no children under the age of 16 and is aged between 35 and 44 years of age.

Profile of less typical self-builder using reference data: rating 14

A two-bedroom terraced dwelling is completed as part of a housing co-operative scheme. The participant was actively involved in the process of construction (through management, co-ordination or building activities). The participant represents social group C1/2 (belonging to lower middle-class and having a clerical position); has two children under the age of 16 and is aged between 25 and 34 years of age.

Typicality ratings for case-studies within the thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>case/indicator</th>
<th>type of dwelling</th>
<th>build type</th>
<th>no of bedrooms</th>
<th>social group</th>
<th>age</th>
<th>Children under 16</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murrell</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridgland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McBurney</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18 (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKenna</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laidlaw</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17 (71%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Summary

Based on comparison with reference data derived from indicators in the AMA report, the case-studies provided for the thesis represent a mean typicality of 78%. Four out of the six case-studies occupy the upper quartile (with two having a very high typicality rating). The least typical are McKenna and Laidlaw, although both case-studies have ratings in the third quartile.
### Table showing social class scale used within marketing research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social grade</th>
<th>Social status</th>
<th>Head of household's occupations</th>
<th>Approximated percentage of families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Upper middle class</td>
<td>Higher managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Middle class</td>
<td>Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Lower middle class</td>
<td>Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Skilled working class</td>
<td>Skilled manual workers</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Those at lowest levels of subsistence</td>
<td>State pensioners or widows (no other earner,), casual or lowest -grade workers</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Definitions as follows:
1. A household consists of either one person living alone, or a group of person, usually but not always members of one family, who live together and whose food and other household expenses are managed as one unit.
2. The head of household is that member of the household who either owns the accommodation or is responsible for the rent or, if the accommodation is rent-free, the person who is responsible for the household having it rent-free. If this person is a married woman whose husband is a member of the household, then the husband is counted as the 'head of the household'.
3. Chief wage earner is the senior working member of the household, normally the oldest related male of 21 years of age or over in full-time employment. If there is no male of 21 years or over then the oldest related female of 21 years and over in full-time employment is taken. Non-related persons living in the household cannot count as chief wage earners.

Appendix F:
Interview Transcripts