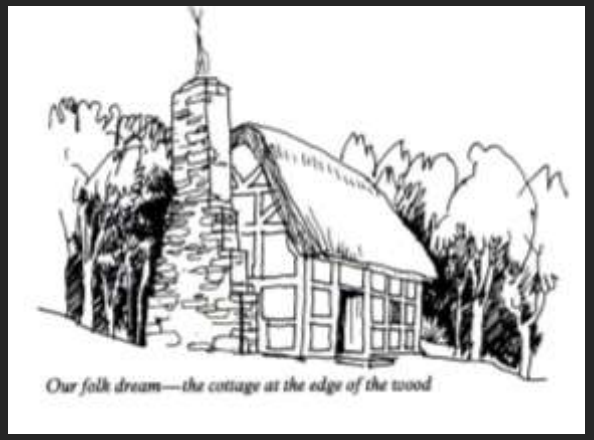
sustainable neighbourhoods need residents in control

Jon Broome
architect & self-builder

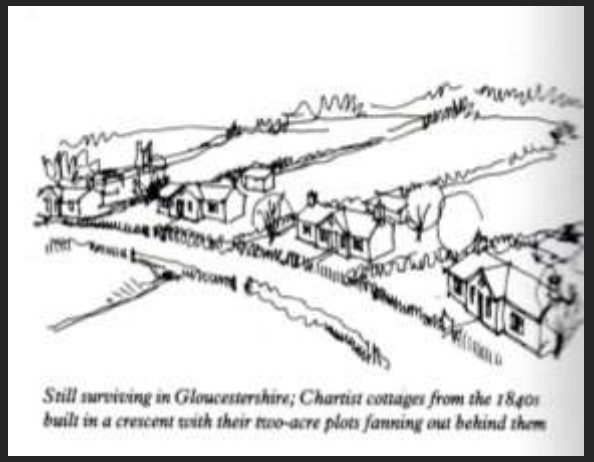
homes in the countryside

- The end of feudalism enabled access to land in the ‘waste’
- The Diggers invaded land in Surrey in 1649
- The Chartists established rural colonies in 1840’s
- First building society 1775 @ Golden Cross Inn, Birmingham…Permanent societies from 1830’s



Our folk dream—the cottage at the edge of the wood

The Diggers were driven off St George's Hill



Still surviving in Gloucestershire; Chartist cottages from the 1840s built in a crescent with their two-acre plots fanning out behind them

mass housing in the industrial cities

- Enclosure of the countryside & demand for housing in the cities created rented slums
- Philanthropists…George Cadbury @ Bournville Village from 1893
- First local authority housing 1900 @ Boundary Estate London

mass housing in the 20th Century

- Speculative suburbia
- Post war reconstruction

- too standardized
- low standards of space & equipment
- inflexible
- poor value
- not sustainable

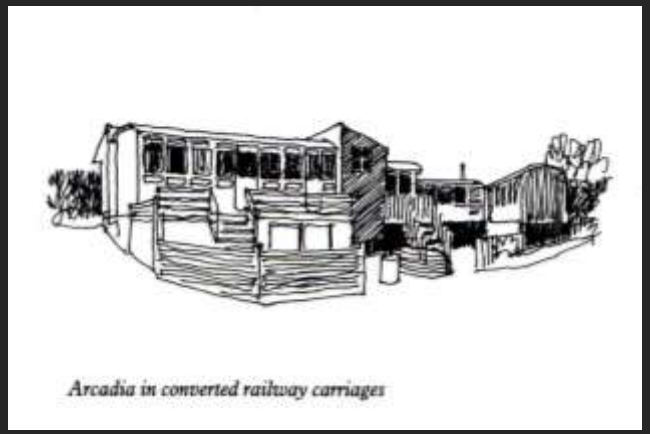
Building Research Establishment exhibition of Modern Methods of Construction

self-help remains alive

- Utopian settlements…from 1900's to 60's
- Plotlands…1920's & 30's
- Individual and some group self-build bungalows & detached houses 1950's & 60's
- Social self-build no skills or access to land or money…Segal Close, Lewisham 1981.

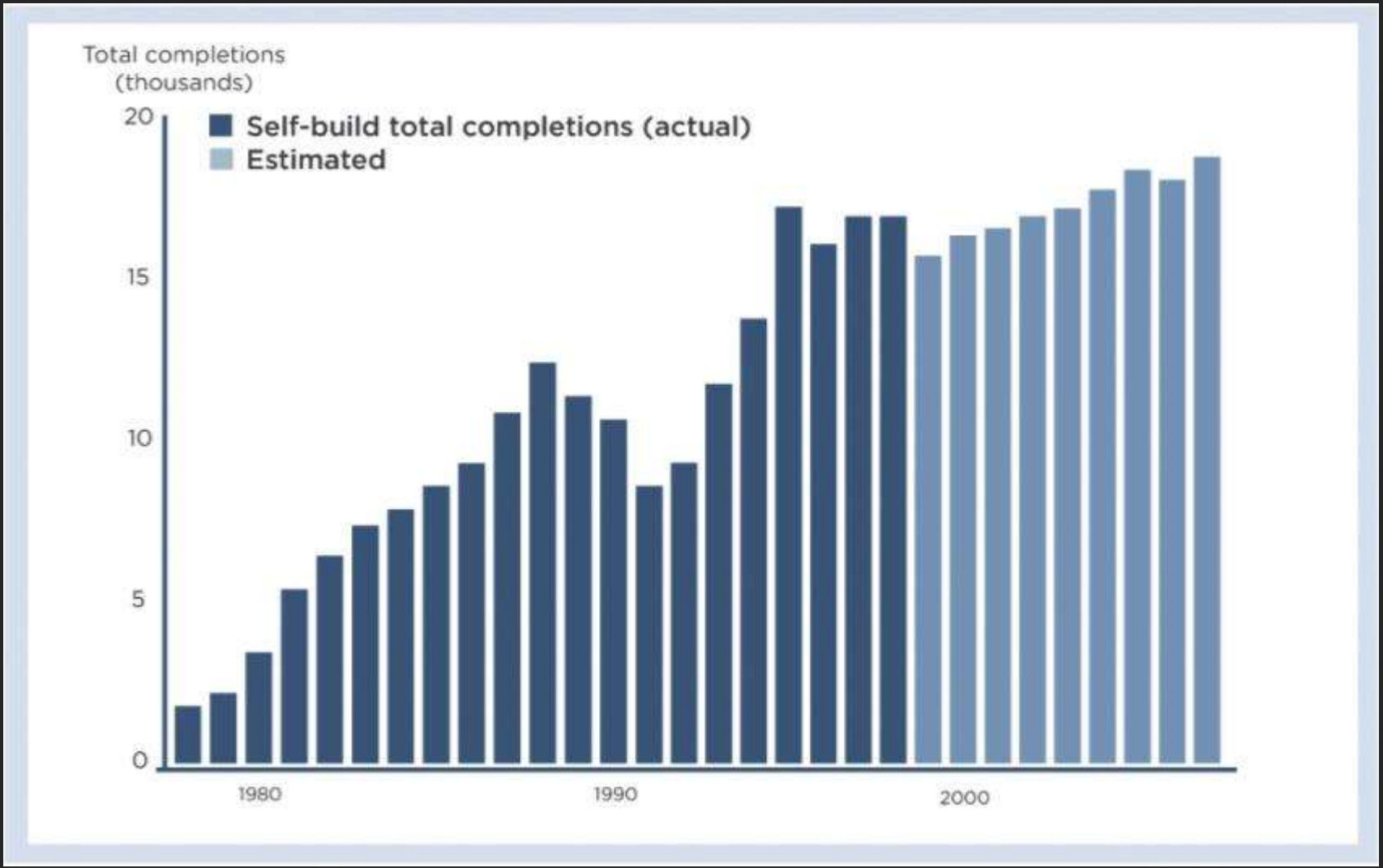
  14 shared ownership homes

Whiteway: owner-built houses in productive gardens surrounded by cherished wilderness



Arcadia in converted railway carriages

self build 1978 - 2007



Source: Joseph Rowntree Trust report – Homes for DIY. 2001

developments in self-help housing

- Co-ops
- Grand Designs

- Custom build

Walthamstow

- 10 two, three & four bedroom houses
- Shell & fit-out
- Passivhaus standard

residents in control

Self-commissioned : you employ the team

Self-procured : you manage the build

Shell by contractor : you fit out the inside

Self-build : you do most of the building

adaptable

Sustainability requires
long term usefulness

why do people want to build?

- Save money? - builders earn their profits
- Make money? - developers take risks

The real benefits are not financial -

- Choice of design and specification

a bigger, more comfortable, more sustainable, cheaper to run house than you could otherwise afford

- Satisfaction & achievement

meeting the challenge, learning skills & creating a home

- Living in a stable community

joint facilities, good neighbours, shared services

potential costs & benefits of building as a member of a group

Three co-operative developments in Brighton one of which was recently subject of a Grand Designs Revisited film & much admired by Kevin McCloud for its success as a community.

Shared decision making can limit choice

But…can reduce costs by bulk buying & shared resources

Lancaster co-housing

- 41 homes
- Passivhaus
- Common house
- Small flat £110k
- 3 bed house £302k

Ashley Vale Bristol

41 homes

Community run

Low energy homes for sale plots @ £35k

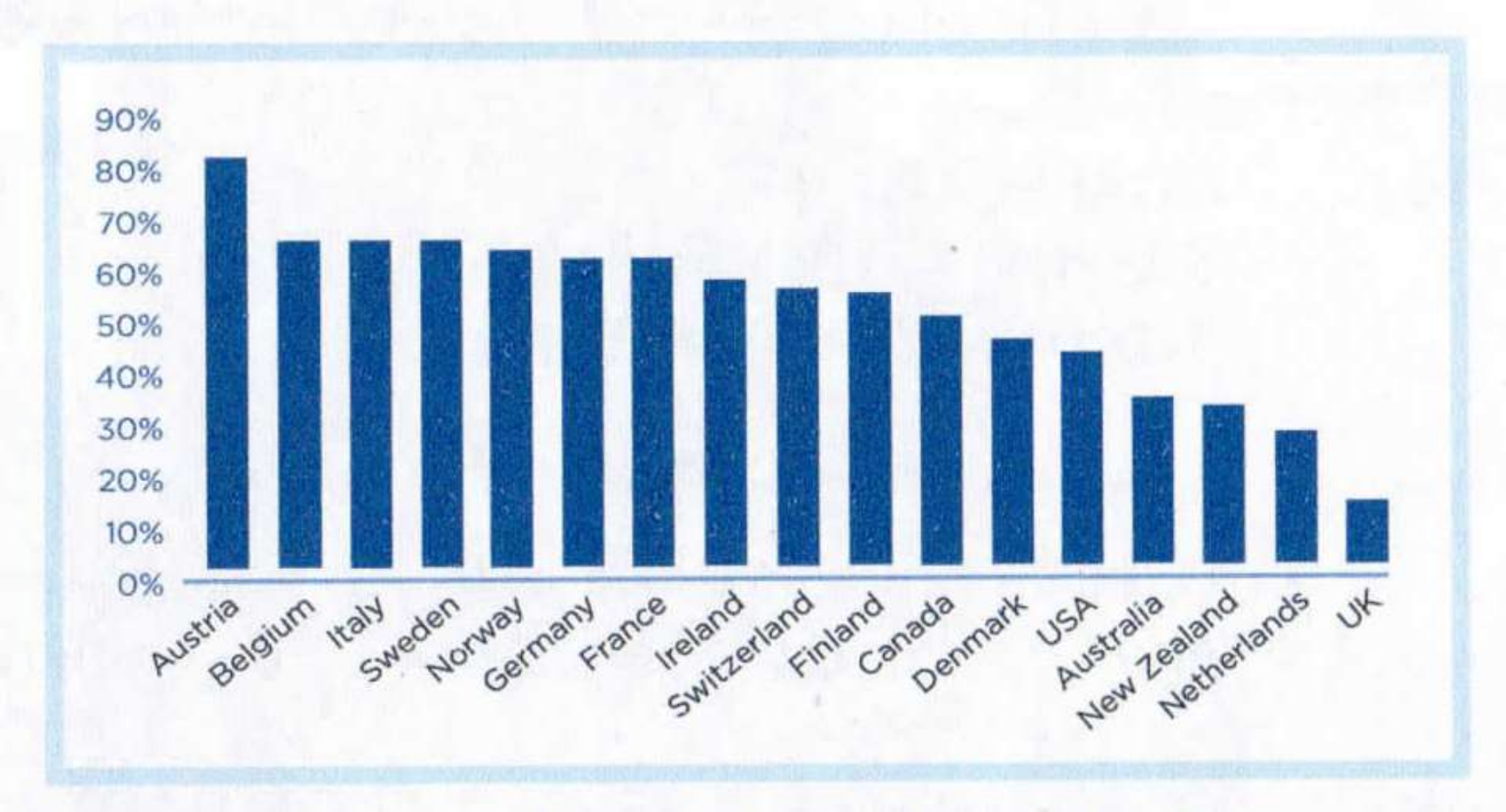
Affordable homes for rent

Refurbished flats

Workspace

Community space

levels of self-build elsewhere

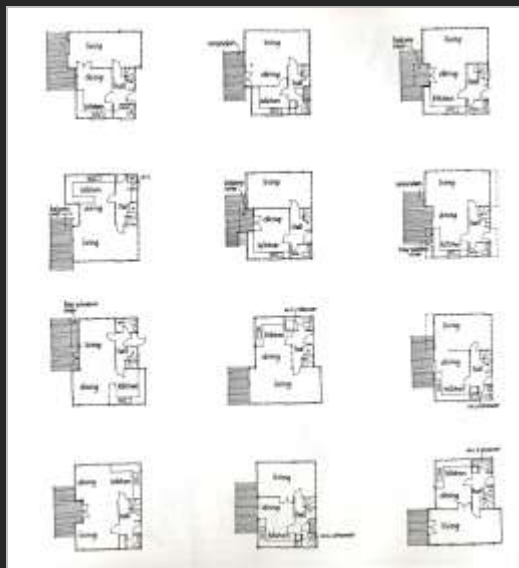


Almere NL

- 3000 homes
- Infrastructure by local authority
- Design within height, width & depth limits
- Small flat @ £25k plot + £50k build cost
- 3 bed house @ £50k plot + £100k build cost

Vauban D

- 2000 homes
- 30 co-housing groups
- 4 floors max, no detached houses
- 25% cost reduction
- Low energy & renewables
- Car free, bicycle friendly
- Community facilities



we should be creating sustainable neighbourhoods of individually designed, affordable, low energy homes with low running costs, occupied by self-confident people with a stake in their community.

a necessary feature of any properly sustainable approach to housing is that residents have an active role in the design and management of their homes and neighbourhoods.

JON
BROOME
ARCHITECTS