

party wall project

is an attempt to bring the self-build ethos to high-density urban areas. Developed by London practice Mae Architects, the concept involves selling plots for terraced houses complete with outline planning permission, services and drainage. Owners could then appoint their own architects and builders – or construct their houses themselves.

Self-build is a fast-rising phenomenon – 1500 homes are now built this way each year, accounting for more than 10% of all homes constructed in the UK. But self-build has mostly been

constrained to low-density suburban or rural areas. “We’re trying to release it’s potential in an urban setting,” said Mae Architects’ Michael Howe. “It’s about achieving affordable space.”

Howe and his partner Alex Ely believe the Party Wall concept could result in cheaper homes and greater architectural variation in urban areas. They hope to persuade volume housebuilders to adopt the idea and are already in talks with a couple of firms.

“Volume housebuilders will do anything – as long as there’s a

profit in it,” says Mae, who thinks the idea could be used to regenerate brownfield areas. “They’d clean up the site, deal with services and drainage, put up loadable party walls and get off site having made their money,” says Howe. “The rest is really simple – it’s all within DIY territory. Planning applications slow [self-builders] down so we propose negotiating planning for a whole street in advance, including parapet heights and a palette of materials.”

Marcus Fairs

www.mae-llp.co.uk

