Figure 14.4
The 'great wall' of residential accommodation as actually built

Michael Wilford describes this as 'gradually embellishing' the brief with the client as the process develops. Eva Jiricna feels that 'the worst client is the person who tells you to get on with it and give me the final product'. Michael Wilford (1991) also sees the client's role as much more active:

> Behind every distinctive building is an equally distinctive client.

This suggests that the client plays more than just a peripheral role. Obviously, the client will probably be extensively involved in the process of drawing up the brief, but many designers seem to prefer the continuing involvement of the client throughout the process.

In contrast with the image of the designer so often portrayed by the magazines and journals, many designers do indeed enjoy close working relationships with their clients.

We use the word 'client' to refer to those who commission designs rather than the word 'customer'. This suggests that the designer is to be considered a 'professional' and thus to owe a greater duty of care to the employer than might be expected by 'customers'. In essence a client has the right to expect to be protected from his or her own ignorance by such a professional. This is in sharp contrast with the notion of 'caveat emptor', or 'buyer beware' considered the norm in commercial contracts. Such a relationship then must clearly depend upon trust, and good designers can be seen to go about building this trust in a number of ways. Herman Hertzberger tells us that his design process cannot work unless this trust is established and explains this with a catering analogy (Lawson 1994):

> If you have not got a good relationship in the human sense with your client, forget it because they'll never trust you. They trust you as long as they have seen things they have eaten before, but as soon as you offer them a dish they have not eaten before you can forget it.

This important lesson for designers reminds us that if we really want to be creative and innovative, then we must first establish confidence in our clients. Perhaps behaving too outlandishly and effecting too eccentric a position may not work after all. Of course this trust has to be a reciprocal relationship to work and the client must offer their trust in order to get the best from their designer. In today's litigious world when the idea of the professions is under attack from government, this may seem an old-fashioned notion. Clients and designers, however, generally seem to agree that some of the very best design comes from these kinds of relationships. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown talk of their need to have the client 'let the architect be on their side'. In our contemporary world we seem to be encouraged at every turn not to offer trust, so the building client employs a project manager to oversee and protect the client's interests in dealings with the architect. More often than not this serves only to make communication complex and remote, and consequently increases the likelihood of misunderstanding and lack of insight into the real issues by the designer.

Just as the designer works in a team, so often does the client. Few major pieces of design are commissioned by a single individual but more usually by a committee of some kind. When the design and construction processes are lengthy, as can often be the case with architecture, the client committee frequently changes its