

rural roots in Hampshire to investigate homes built. Nick Duxbury returns to his combating nimbyism to get affordable attempting the near-impossible task of A project in south west England is

have a terrible confession to make: I might be a 'nimby'.

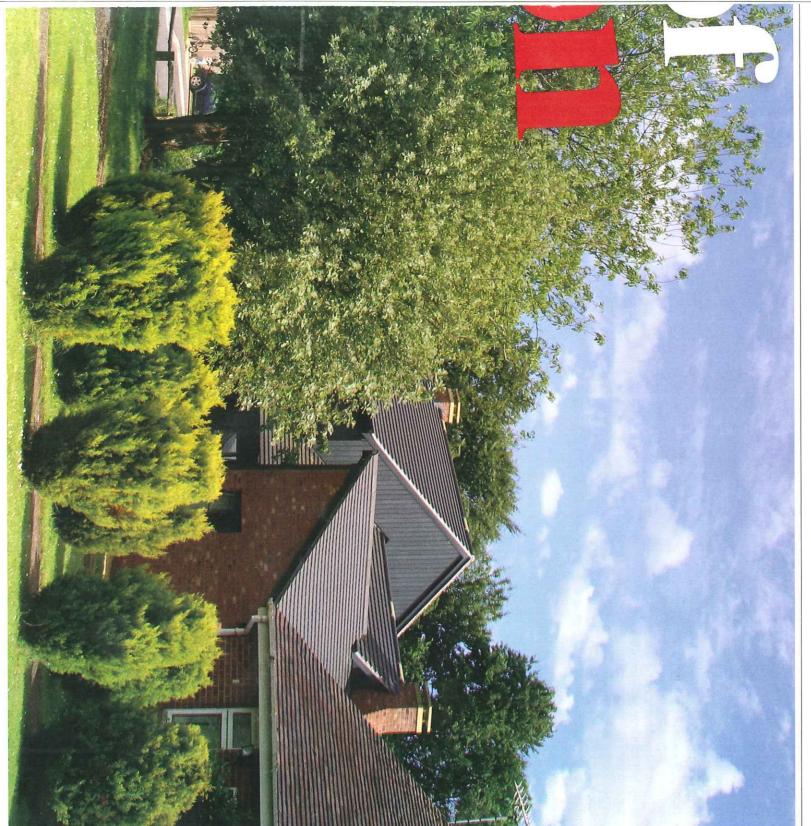
The realisation hit me a few weekends ago strolling down the leafy country lane that leads into my sleepy home village of Martin. This picturesque settlement on the westerly edge of Hampshire between Salisbury and Blandford has been my family's home for 30 years - and in that time there have been few notable changes.

The last time I raised an eyebrow at a local development was when ferret racing returned to the Martin Club. Many families have lived here for generations and the community is extremely tight-knit, with a village have

cooperative farm and farm shop. The homes are nearly all attractive period houses dating back to the 15th century dotted along grassy verges - and even though I could never hope to afford

any of them, I feel no resentment; simply grateful for the village's enduring beauty and resilience to change.

How would I feel about homes being built in Martin? The truth is, despite being pro-development in principle, on my own hallowed turf, my first reaction would be a defensive one - protectionist. This stance can, fairly, be characterised as that of a nimby - one whose response to proposed development, regardless of how nuanced or reasonable, can be



reduced to 'not in my back yard'. But if not here, then where?

The response to this challenge can only really go one of three ways. First, a nimby can take up the position of a 'sobby' and suggest building in 'some other b**ger's back yard'. Second, a nimby could become a 'banana', and respond with a variation of 'build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything'. Finally, a nimby can become a 'yimby' - someone who says 'yes in my back yard', either agreeing to plans, or suggesting a viable alternative. It will come as no surprise that this third response is the rarest.

Fighting acronyms with acronyms, an initiative called Harah, or Hamp-

The housing development in Martin, Hampshire, and older homes in the sleepy rural village (inset)

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shire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing, has been working to make this third response the default one in villages across Hampshire and surrounding counties. Pronounced 'hurrah', this scheme is seeking to tackle mounting rural housing need by converting prospective nimbys such as myself into yimbys.

Promoting development
The venture, set up by Hampshire
Council in 2005, works with Hyde
Housing Group and rural enablers
from a community action group to
convince communities of the case of
development. It does this by visiting
parish councils, helping them quan-

e tifying housing need, and then by eaddressing local concerns about proposed affordable housing development. So far, it is the only scheme of its kind in England.

So, what is the process for converting nimbys into yimbys - and most importantly, as Harah nears its 10th anniversary, is its approach working?

Before addressing these questions, it is time to admit a vested interest: my home village of Martin and the surrounding villages are in prime Harah heartland and are being targeted for development - specifically for affordable housing. In small communities, even the smallest change munities, even the smallest change

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rural authenticity are at a premium and it is difficult to resist taking a pro-

pragmatic in his response to this point. We are building on green fields - I can only do so much to address your concern. Where there is nimbyism it is damn near impossible to overcome altogether. You will never get rid of it entirely. You will always get some of it in the communities - and often in the Chris Buchan-Hepburn, head of rural projects at 50,000-home Hyde, is

Indeed, Mr Buchan-Hepburn recalls one incident in which Hyde was set to exchange contracts on a plot of land for £100,000. Nimbys clubbed together and offered the landowner £350,000 for the plot to block the scheme.

Overall, however, the ethos behind Harah is that people are less likely to object to development in their back-

list for 10 years knowing they are not going to be housed there,' explains Javed Ditta, housing development manager at New Forest Council. 'Need often only emerges when the development process starts.' yards if they understand the degree of local need. Unfortunately, in rural communities housing need is often concealed - in part because people don't join waiting lists. 'People can be reluctant to put themselves down on a

required for the average mortgage in Hampshire - well over double the average salary of £23,145. But in quaint rural villages things are much worse: the average home costs almost 14 times risen 56 per cent, compared with a 23 per cent increase in wages. As a result, an annual income of £61,737 is now On an area-wide basis, need is get-ting worse. Over the past decade house prices in the south east have the average income.

The housing in Martin was built on land backing on to green fields (above), and a map of Harah schemes

'Martin

Priced out

because social housing can be associated with urban living and there is a sometimes a perception that social tenants will cause problems. 'Often they are concerned that affordable housing could devalue their homes. There is little recognition of the social munities can be more likely to favour affordable housing development, while relative newcomers who have spent a lot of money on their dream homes in a rural idyll are more often the source of objection. He says this is that more established voices in com-Mr Ditta explains that as a result, many young people are forced to leave their communities. This means cohesion that they offer,' Mr Ditta

Mr Buchan-Hepburn says there are also a lot of second homes in the area. It is often lost on the owners that people could have only moved out of a village five years ago - but that all their family lives there and they have been there all their lives, he adds.



mandate for change." always accountable.
You need to create a small communities is significant. You are "The pressure in

> yimbys. The parish council actively welcomed the development of six My home village of Martin, as it hap-pens, is the rarest of things: a village of

the architects to return to the drawing board. 'When the designs changed everyone got on board. It was a great idea and still is - it's important to keep people in communities,' she explains.

Now the village is calling for more homes. 'Martin came to us and asked for development,' Mr Buchan-Hepburn states. 'It's quite a rarity that. [Martin's] public consultation events are among the most positive I have ever seen.' homes for social rent two years ago -and now it is calling for more. Susan Spreadbury was chair of the Martin Parish Council at the time the development was planned. She says there were objections to the initial designs, so the parish council asked

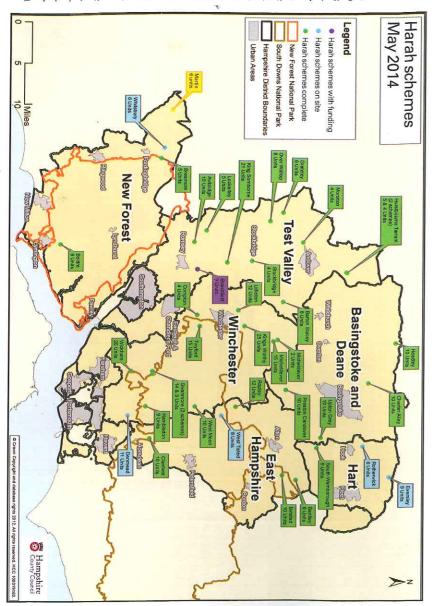
ositive I have ever seen.' has high housing need,'

agrees Mr Ditta. 'We could have filled the homes we built three times over. We weren't expecting to go back for 10 to 15 years, but they have asked for more. They are lucky that they have the land to enable development, though.'

The new homes are tucked at the back of a lane against a high grass field and wooded footpath looking out towards the rolling hills of Martin Down - Thomas Hardy country and a nature reserve. To me they appear attractive enough with dark boarding and simple, minimal architecture. They might look out of place next to 300-year-old cottages on the main road in the village, but they sit comfortably here, with a local playing field, and other younger families living in the bornes around them. in the homes around them.

Involving the community

Harah is certainly pleased with the scheme. So much so, the homes ▶



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are showcased to other local councils on a Harah parish bus tour. This is a crucial part of Harah's engagement strategy: establish need and then encourage local participation in the design and development process. The scheme is funded by a growing network of district councils: New Forest, Test Valley, South Downs National Park, East Hampshire, Basingstrake and Doone Hart Winches development grant. The money is used to build websites, host events and bus tours, and to pay the salaries of the rural housing enablers. These are important as they are viewed as neutral parties by parish councils.

'Community action groups help pull together neighbourhood plans,' Authority put in £6,000 a year each, while Hampshire Council and Hyde put in £40,000 a year and the Homes and Communities Agency provides development grant. The money is ingstoke and Deane, Hart, Winches ter and New Forest National Parl National Park

together neighbourhood plans,' explains Mr Buchan-Hepburn. These plans are used by councils to inform their local plans which dictate councilwide housing need. 'They employ the rural enablers whose job it is to help communities deliver development. They can tell parishes that we have helped other parishes.

'[Communities] can be a bit parochial at times, but they do care about what other parishes are doing 'boarda's

what other parishes are doing, 'he adds.
Joseph Reilly, a parish councillor in
the New Forest village of Copythorn,
near Southampton, is one of the councillors who has been on Harah's
famous bus rides, because the village
is being targeted for development by
Harah. He has been a lone voice in
calling for more affordable housing in
the village because he is concerned
that young people are being priced
out. 'What Harah does is a great idea,'
he says. 'The problem is that people in
the parish are not all that amanable to the parish are not all that amenable to the parish are not all that amenable to the idea of building homes because there is some stigma [towards affordable housing]. [Hyde] tried before and there was total uproar. The chair of

the council was very anti at the start, but now he is coming round to the idea. We have 30 people on the housing waiting list so there is need. But you have to convince everyone else in the village, too.

Small victories

Every win - however small - plays a crucial role in teeing up the next one.

For instance, on the back of the homes built in Martin, the nearby village of Breamore agreed to the development of five homes in an old railway yard. Having been shown these homes and the resulting local benefits, the neigbouring village of Whitsbury is also now planning to build the first affordable homes in a generation.

able homes in a generation.

'Where we have delivered homes, it is only ever with the parish council's I support,' adds Mr Ditta. 'Sometimes we have lost a parish council along the I we have lost a parish council along the I way. The pressure in small communities is significant. You are always ties is significant. You are always accountable. You need to create a mandate for change. Normally when we commission surveys we only get a

been received entirely willingly, even with all this effort to change percep-tions. Waine Lawton, chair of Twyford Parish Council, recalls that one Harah 30 to 40 per cent response rate.'
Not every Harah development has

it was first tabled and there were considerable objections.

He adds that despite wanting more new homes to get 'new blood' into the village, the 15 social homes weren't as integrated into village life as hoped. 'Being affordable housing, the homes were close together and high density.

"Harah doesn't purport to be a perfect works better. seen anything that is effective. I haven't partnership, but it

It was almost like a closed area a long way from the centre of the village. Having said that, they were built and

having 'a good professional conversa-tion' with Harah. In fact, he says: are serving a purpose.'
Despite the early opposition,
Mr Lawton recalls the parish council '[Harah] was perceived as a consultancy that showed us other previous

West Meon, near Petersfield A tour of new Harah developments (above) and recently built homes in

developments in other villages that looked good.'

This impression of neutrality - or at least representing the best interest of communities - is interesting given

Harah's clear agenda.

Hyde, which won the tender for Harah's development partner twice with the current extension running until 2018, appears to be seen as the big bad developer in the first instance, while, based on the responses from parish councillors in the Hampshire area contacted at random by *Inside* Housing, Harah has managed to develop trust among communities. Asked if the rural enablers it pays to visit parish councils are seen as Harah puppets, Mr Buchan-Hepburn seems surprised. 'I don't think it is a huge issue,' he replies. 'They are seen as quite independent.'

So what does success look like for Harah? The answer, for all that work, many sound a bit limited. The scheme aims for 50 homes a year, while Hyde has an overall rural target of 75 homes a year. It has been hard fought. 'I think it has been successful,' states Mr Buchan-Hephurn 'Wa home.'

it has been successful, states Mr it has been successful, we have created Buchan-Hepburn. We have created 1,000 bed spaces. The odds are that those people would have been lost to

communities otherwise.'
The start was slow,' admits Mr
Ditta. 'But in recent years there have
been tangible results. But it's not just
about housing. Harah doesn't purport
to be a perfect partnership, but it is
effective. I haven't seen anything that

works better.'
So, as a potential nimby, how do I feel about more of the same develop-

ment in my backyard? Well...
After my time with the Harah team learning about local housing need, I think it best to get on board with my fellow villagers and brand myself a neimby: 'not enough in my back yard'.



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