A home for where the heart is





HARAH
Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing
Rural homes for rural people

"The Parish is very satisfied with the development, a nice layout and an asset for the Parish."

"Listen to people's concerns, but if there is a majority democratic view in favour, keep on with it. It is worth it in the end!"

"Get on and do it. There is always a need!"

"Do it for the local residents."

Responses from the Parish Council Survey 2013

Acknowledgements

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Most importantly, we thank our residents for giving up their time to be interviewed; their stories demonstrate the value HARAH schemes bring to local communities, and we hope will encourage more parish councils to consider a scheme in their parish.



Mr Bunce, seen here with his chickens, is a retired postman and lives in a property built by HARAH in Ropley, East Hampshire.

A home for where the heart is

Affordable homes strengthening village communities

"We have a rural housing crisis. High house prices, low wages, seasonal rental and jobs markets, high levels of second home ownership, and an ageing population are all piling pressure on to rural communities and local services."

Rural Housing: Countryside in Crisis, National Housing Federation, 2014

For decades, South East house price rises have consistently outstripped wage increases. Across Hampshire, many rural villages are no longer affordable for local people. In many villages, mortgage costs or the costs of insecure private rented accommodation alone can exceed the monthly wages of locally employed people.

By 2014 a gross annual income of £61,737 was needed for the average mortgage in Hampshire, well over double the average salary of £23,145. Rural areas were especially affected with the average home costing almost 14 times the average income. The result is that young families and lower income earners are being priced away from the places where they grew up - local shops and services often disappearing with them, together with the loss of informal networks for care, support and enterprise that lie at the heart of thriving village life.

Across rural Hampshire, however, communities have been coming together to stem this tide through promoting small developments of affordable homes. Developed to be sensitive to the local rural setting, these homes are allocated to applicants according to their local connection and need for an affordable home.

In sharing stories from residents for whom an affordable rural home transformed their life, this publication applauds the vision and commitment of village residents and parish councils who have made a lasting difference to hundreds of families through supporting their local affordable housing scheme. Perhaps you will be inspired to follow in their footsteps.

It comes as no surprise that the households featured here are thrilled that their village's support for affordable housing enabled them to find a secure home close to the heart of their extended family. What may be less acknowledged is the degree to which they make a valuable contribution to village community life and rural sustainability.



When HARAH surveyed residents of completed affordable homes it became clear that, while many were providing vital support to local family members and using shops and services, others were also contributing directly to the sustainability of their village as employees or volunteers.

Has your village considered the role that rural affordable homes could play in sustaining local services?

HARAH scheme of five affordable homes, Breamore, New Forest.

Helping sustain rural services

1. *Are there fewer families with young children than there used to be in the village?*
2. *Does the village feel empty during the working week?*
3. *Is the number of children attending the village school falling or do many pupils live outside the village?*
4. *Do you know any residents who wish to downsize but cannot find a smaller home in the village?*
5. *Is the future of the pub or local shop uncertain?*
6. *Has church attendance declined, particularly for the family service?*
7. *Are sports, play and other facilities under-used?*
8. *Is there a shortage of local labour for local businesses and farms?*

Here's how local affordable housing can help address these issues:

1. *Housing for local people helps people on modest incomes, such as farm workers, teachers, firemen and cleaners, to remain or return to the village they grew up in.*
2. *Research suggests that people with a strong local connection to a parish are more likely to:*
   - *Be in the village during the day providing support or care to family and friends;*
   - *Work locally;*
   - *Send their children to the local school;*
   - *Use local facilities including the shop, church, pub and play area;*
   - *Organise or be involved in village events and clubs.*



In the stories that follow, we introduce some rural Hampshire residents who explain what their HARAH home means to them, and the contribution they make to their village.



The Drake family's story

Melissa Drake, her husband Kelvin, and their three children moved into a three bedroom HARAH property in Pilley (Boldre), New Forest, in 2011. Melissa has lived in the parish all her life and attended the village school. Her family has lived there for generations.

"I would have struggled and continued to live in the bungalow rather than move out of the village."

Before being offered the three bedroom HARAH property in Pilley, the family were living in a two bedroom bungalow in the village. Melissa was pregnant with her third child and the family were worried about the future as their two bedroom bungalow would be too small for their growing family. They did not want to move out of the parish as their children were settled in the local village school. "I would have struggled and continued to live in the bungalow rather than move out of the village, the three children would have had to sleep in the bigger bedroom and Kelvin and I would have had to have the small one" says Melissa.

Being offered a three bedroom HARAH property in Pilley means that the family are now able to continue to live where their roots are. Grandparents are only a stone's throw away making it easy for them to visit their grandchildren and help out with childcare. "We are thrilled to be able to continue living here, I have lived in Boldre all my life" says Melissa. The family use the village shop and post office regularly which was actually on the brink of closure four years ago. Kelvin has been heavily involved with the local youth club group for three years, encouraging local people to get involved. The club nearly closed and it required the next generation of children to keep it going.

As well as working as a HGV Driver, Kelvin raises money for the local school, is on the preschool committee, is involved in organising the local village pantomime and is a member of the Romsey Old Cadets. If people like Kelvin were unable to continue living in rural villages, these activities, which are key to establishing and maintaining social networks, would not take place.



"We are thrilled to be able to continue living here"



Katy's story

Katy's family have lived in Binsted for over 20 years, she attended the village school and her husband Alex's family once owned the local pub. She and Alex moved away in 2002 as Alex was working in Oxford. Katy felt isolated and when she fell pregnant with her eldest son, the couple decided to move back to East Hampshire to be closer to family and friends.

"I feel less isolated, I have my friends and family here."

Katy and Alex had two more boys. Katy loved growing up in a village and the couple wanted the same experience for their boys. The family moved to a three bedroom house in Binsted but were struggling to afford the rent and the house was very cold. Their rent was £1150 a month.

Katy saw the advert for the HARAH properties in Binsted in the local newspaper. She attended a HARAH open day. She was already on the housing register and was advised to bid for a property because of her strong local connection. The couple made a bid and were thrilled when they received a letter explaining that they had been successful.

The couple really enjoy watching their children grow up in a close knit community. Katy worked in the local pub so knows a lot of people in Binsted. "It is such a lovely community, everyone knows everyone, it is just lovely, people are so friendly. I feel less isolated, I have my friends and family here."

Katy attends the local baby group and the 'Messy Church' once a month on a Sunday which holds craft activities for children to get involved. Her boys spent all summer outside and attend the village school and local playgroup. "It has been brilliant, we can walk to school which is lovely."

There are children living next door who are a similar age to her three boys. Katy's brothers also live close by and it is great for the children to be able to see their cousins regularly.



"It is such a lovely community, everyone knows everyone"



Anne's story

Anne Drinkwater and her daughter moved into a property built through the HARAH Partnership in Barton Stacey, Test Valley, in 2010. Anne moved to the village 47 years ago. Her father was an engineer in the army and the family lived in army quarters. Anne has lived in the village ever since. Anne has four siblings and three of them still live in the village.

"House prices have shot up over the years – they were once affordable!"

Anne is unable to purchase or rent a property on the open market. "House prices have shot up over the years – they were once affordable!" Prior to moving into the two bedroom property built by HARAH, Anne was living in a damp and mouldy bungalow in the village.

Anne sees her family everyday. All her friends and everyone she grew up with still live in the village. Her daughter was also brought up there too, and most of her friends still live in the village. Anne and her daughter both work in the village, helping to keep valuable local services going. Anne works in the nearby factory which is a stone's throw away from her house; she has also worked in the local pub, the local shop for 10 years and was the cleaner in the village hall for 20 years. Anne's daughter works for a local village business and also works evenings in the local pub. "We are very lucky in this village to still have a shop, post office and a pub."

Anne explains that her bills have reduced considerably since moving into the property. Each property has solar panels which help with heating costs. "I have lived in this village for 47 years, all our family still live here; I also work in the village and know everybody. The house is lovely; I wouldn't change anything, absolutely lovely."



"I have lived in this village for 47 years"



Mr & Mrs Blake's story

Anne Blake was born in Twyford as the 5th of 6 children. She grew up there, went to the village school and worked in the village laundry and residential home. Peter worked as a local taxi driver.

"I went to loads of trouble to prove that I am from the area."

Anne met her husband Peter 50 years ago when she was swimming at Twyford locks. They married in the village in 1966 and rented a council property while saving up to buy their own home. They eventually bought their own house in Twyford and lived there for 31 years, bringing up their two children alongside family and friends. "Everyone knew each other, it was a real community, we had 8 shops and 4 pubs" says Peter.

Unfortunately, the couple hit financial problems and had to move to Romsey. They did not like living away from the village as their whole life was in Twyford. Luckily, the couple were able to move back into the village into tied accommodation as Anne was managing two nursing homes in the village. After 8 years, Anne decided to retire but the couple were unable to remain living in their tied house.

At £900-£1000 a month, properties were far too expensive for them to rent in Twyford, so they had no choice but to move out of their village again. The couple were registered with Hampshire Home Choice. They were very excited when the HARAH scheme was built in Twyford and wanted to know if they were eligible. They made a bid and were absolutely delighted to be given a property in the village. "I went to loads of trouble to prove that I am from the area. I was so excited I couldn't believe it, I was round here the next day to see which one it was" says Anne. She has spent her life in the village and has only been out of the village for four years. Anne's roots go back a long way as her father went to the village school 100 years ago. Her mother met her father in Twyford prep school. Her grandfather worked on the viaduct.

The couple both see their brothers and sisters regularly. Peter's sister has Parkinson's and Anne is able to help her as they live so close. Also, her great nephew lives two doors away, with his two children and partner. "I am sure that you can tell that we are very thrilled to be back where we belong."



"We are very thrilled to be back where we belong"



Michelle's story

Michelle Green and her family moved into a three bedroom property in Monk Sherborne, Basingstoke & Deane, in 2009. Michelle's mother, step-dad and brother live across the road.

"Our family have been connected to the village for at least two generations."

Before being offered a HARAH property in Monk Sherborne, the family were living in overcrowded conditions in a two bedroom maisonette with Michelle's father.

Michelle, her husband and eldest son shared one bedroom. The maisonette had been built straight after World War 2 and suffered from mould. The family could not afford to rent privately so they were considering moving away.

The family were delighted to be eligible for a HARAH property in Monk Sherborne. Michelle visits her family regularly and her brother is on hand to babysit the boys. The young family use the local hairdressers and garage, helping to keep local services going.

Michelle's husband is an auditor and Michelle has explained that she would like to work in the village when her boys are a little older, looking after residents' horses or dogs.

Michelle is really happy that her children are able to grow up in a rural location. "My children spent all summer outside."



"My children spent all summer outside"



Jade's story

Jade Cornwall has lived in Twyford for nine years. As well as working for Dignity Funerals, Jade is a member of the parish council, is the director for Twyford playgroup, a trustee for Twyford Parish Hall, and serves on The Hyde Group and A2Dominion residents' panels.

"There is nothing for someone like me who cannot afford a mortgage."

Jade moved into a three bedroom property built by HARAH in 2012. Before this, Jade and her family were living in a tiny two bedroom property in the village. "The children's bedroom was so small that they could not have a normal sized bunk bed. My youngest two had to share a bed together. My eldest is autistic so it is important that he has enough space."

At the time, five of them were living in this tiny house. Jade explained that it was difficult to have good quality family time at home together as the lounge was only big enough for a two seater sofa. It was a struggle to cook and eat a family meal in the small kitchen. "You do not realise how stressful it is unless you are in that situation."

The house was too cramped for their needs but Jade and her family had no choice. At the time, the cheapest three bedroom property available in Twyford village was priced at £325,000. A 20% deposit for a property at this price would cost £65,000. To afford a mortgage at 3.5 times annual income, a young family would need an annual income of £74,000. At the same time, the cheapest three bedroom property to rent in Twyford was on the market for £1,275 per month.

"There is nothing for someone like me who cannot afford a mortgage or to rent privately, you have to either live in a city or with your parents. As a family, we were so cramped due to the lack of space, and damp problems that also came with the old house. When I received the letter saying that I had been offered this house it meant the world to me. To some people it may only be some bricks or a building, but for me it is mine and my children's whole future, a home that I had waited a long time for, and a home that has brought happiness into our lives."



"A home that has brought happiness into our lives"

The Wheeler family's ongoing story

Doug Wheeler's family have lived in Mattingley for generations; Doug, his parents, grandparents and great grandparents all grew up in the village. He would love to continue living in Mattingley among family and friends but is unable to do so as he cannot access affordable accommodation.

"A whole month's salary would be gone on renting a property privately in Mattingley."

He and his family currently live in a small two bedroom house in Heckfield which is not big enough for their growing family. Two of Doug's daughters share the first bedroom and he and his wife share the second bedroom with their 18 month old daughter. The family are currently on Hart District Council's Housing Register. Renting privately is not an option. "A whole month's salary would be gone on renting a property privately in Mattingley."

Doug works as an electrician and is active in the local community. He is a parish councillor in Mattingley and is currently talking to Hampshire County Council to make Hound Green a 'Site of Importance for Nature Conservation', giving future generations the opportunity to learn about plants and wildlife.

"We need young people to keep the village healthy and moving but the next generation cannot afford to buy a house." Doug explains that young families are forced to move away leaving parents behind who need support. Doug visits his parents every day to make sure they are okay and walks their dog. "My parents aren't old but they rely on us to help them out and the reality is, they are going to get older and will rely on us more."

Doug explains that his life in Mattingley is everything that he has ever known, his hobbies and all his friends are there. To be able to move into an affordable property in Mattingley that is an adequate size for his family would be a dream come true for him. "We just want a family home."



"We just want a family home"



HARAH scheme of affordable homes, Hambledon, Hampshire.

What can your village do to help?

If you live in rural Hampshire and want to know how your village can help tackle the rural housing crisis, you can contact the Rural Housing Enablers at Action Hampshire. The Rural Housing Enablers work in partnership with communities to provide small affordable housing schemes for local people in rural Hampshire.

The Rural Housing Enablers:

- Help identify local housing need with parish councils through coordinating housing need surveys, and/or organising affordable housing drop in events to encourage local people to register on the waiting list for affordable housing.
- Work with parish councils to find potential sites for a small affordable housing scheme.
- Approach landowners with, or on behalf of, the community.
- Hold public consultation events to give residents the opportunity to comment on potential sites.

Information and guidance about rural affordable housing is also available for residents, parish councils and landowners from the HARAH website **www.harah.org.uk**

The Hyde Group
Making a lasting difference

Hampshire County Council

Homes & Communities Agency

New Forest District Council

Winchester City Council

Test Valley Borough Council

Action Hampshire

Hart District Council

East Hampshire District Council

New Forest National Park

Basingstoke and Deane

About HARAH

Known as HARAH, the Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing was formed in 2005. Our main aim is to increase the supply of affordable housing in the rural villages of Hampshire, to ensure local people are able to afford to live in the places where they were brought up, work, or have family connections, and in doing so to help strengthen rural communities. Around 50 affordable homes are created in rural villages by HARAH each year with an average development size of 9 homes.

More information is available at **www.harah.org.uk**

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