

## OPENING BIDS

## ANNE ASHWORTH PROPERTY EDITOR

## Nimbys prepare to meet your match – in the shape of the ‘local delivery vehicle’



THE local delivery vehicle, the porous pavement and Hip replacement room. These brand new bits of jargon may mean little to you just now. But they are set to figure in most conversations about the property market, the Government's housebuilding programme and the long-term consequences of this summer's floods.

Nimbyism may be part of the national psyche. But it is soon to meet an adversary in the shape of the local delivery vehicle (LDV), a recommendation of this week's Housing Green Paper. These bodies, to be set up by town halls, will be charged with securing sites for the construction of Gordon Brown's 210,000 affordable homes. The LDV — which can have housebuilders as participants — will park its tanks on the lawns of parties objecting to new developments in their backyards. Councils will face penalties if their LDVs do not prepare the path for armies of mechanical diggers. If LDVs are turbocharged — their powers are not yet defined — opposition to new housing schemes could become very difficult.

If there are to be curbs on a homeowner's

## The fourth bedroom will masquerade as the ‘study’

right to protest at what is built on his doorstep, then it is reasonable to expect that the nature and quality of that construction meets the highest standards. This is especially so if, as ministers have made clear, there is to be more building on flood plains, although this practice has added to the devastation wreaked by the floods. The arrival of the LDV should liberate lucky housebuilding groups from much planning aggravation and delay. In return they must allocate resources to resolve flood-risk issues.

This means more research into the materials for porous pavements — which permit water run-off — and the installation of defences such as balancing ponds, landscape features that can contain flood water.

Such measures have a commercial pay-off. Mark Wilkinson, of the agent Knight Frank, says that buyers are now increasingly aware of flood risk. The popularity of Wayne Hemingway's The Bridge scheme in Dartford, Kent, is evidence of this trend. As we report on pages

6-7, the development's mixture of affordability and tactics to combat the consequences of climate change is proving a winning combination.

The Hip replacement room is a tactic of a different kind. The term is the new slang for the fourth bedroom that is described as a “study” to avoid paying £500 or so for a home information pack (Hip) — something that must, by law, be provided by anyone putting such a property on the market from next Wednesday (see page 4). This strategy would result in your home being excluded from online searches for four-bedroomed properties and also in a lower price. Hip replacement room — shorthand for a case of midsummer madness.

## HERE COMES THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A quick opinion poll on the characteristics of Bayswater yielded the following: “shabby tourist hotels”, “scuzzy luggage shops”, “seedy bedsits” and “peeling stucco exteriors”. In short, London W2, the cosmopolitan area north of Hyde Park, does not have a good press, despite its central location. Hedge fund managers shun the place, speeding west down to Notting Hill, still their “nabe” of choice.

But, suddenly, Bayswater is emerging as a new hot spot for the moneyed — another sign that the London market is ever more decoupled from the action, or lack of action, elsewhere. The rundown hotels are being converted into homes and prices are surging. Robert Bailey, of Robert Bailey Property, hunts down homes for

the very rich. He says: “People who cannot afford nearby Mayfair and Marylebone are turning to Bayswater. You can get a flat in a block with wonderful views of Hyde Park for around £600,000.” This is a snip for a metropolitan pad.

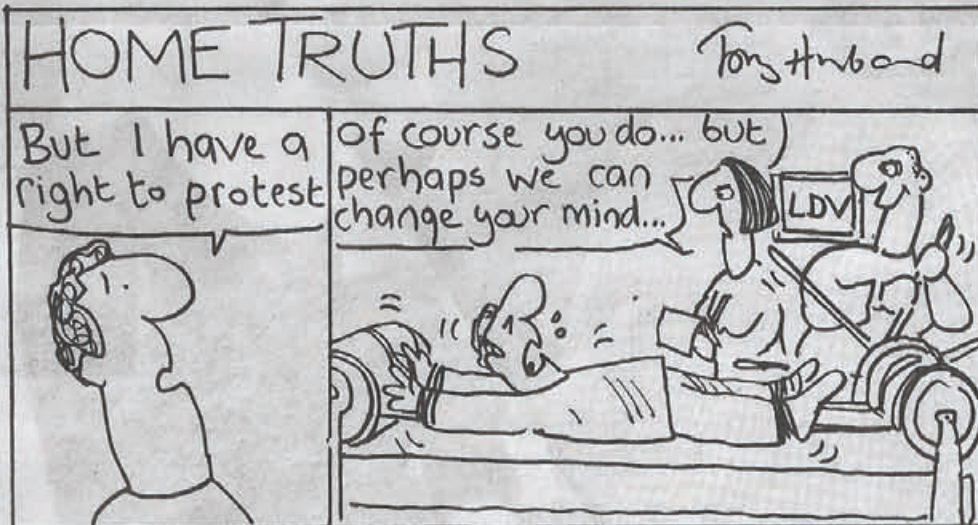
Tony Blair, it seems, may have the last laugh in his much derided choice of residence — in Bayswater's Connaught Square.

## MONETARY OVERKILL

Elsewhere, a torpor has overtaken the housing market in most regions. Growth has stalled, according to Nationwide, as borrowers count the cost of rising interest rates and the prospect of yet more expensive borrowing. The annual pace of house price growth is now 9.9 per cent, down from 11.1 per cent in June. The three-month trend also shows a decline.

Fionnuala Earley, the building society's chief economist, is now talking of the danger of “monetary overkill”. The Bank of England could be contemplating another interest rate rise next month to 6 per cent to suppress inflation, but homeowners could suffer unduly from such a decision.

She points to the nasty surprise that lies in store for the thousands of borrowers whose fixed-rate deals taken out two years ago are now expiring. There has been much talk of the squeeze on the finances of these households. Let us hope that the Bank of England has been paying due attention to their situation. [anne.ashworth@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:anne.ashworth@thetimes.co.uk)



## HOME ON THE WEB



Hip hip hooray? Here we go again

IT'S the great Hips countdown — again. Homeowners could be excused for feeling a tad confused about what it will mean for them — if so, turn to page 4 for the lowdown. If you are about to sell a property that has four bedrooms or more, you will need to find a pack provider without further delay. Enter [thehipexchange.com](http://thehipexchange.com): a website that matches sellers with domestic energy assessors, home inspectors and pack providers, free of charge. More than 200 domestic energy assessors across England and Wales are registered on the HIP Exchange — they bid for your custom based on the size and location of your home. The

website's creator, Henry Pryor, must be confident that there will be no U-turns on this beleaguered initiative. But if the plug is pulled at the last minute, he admits: “I'd be joining a long queue of people outside Communities and Local Government with flour and egg.”

One website for homeowners and nosy neighbours alike is [propertypriceadvice.co.uk](http://propertypriceadvice.co.uk), which provides online valuation reports. Answer questions about your property — how many bedrooms you have, whether you have river views or special features such as electric gates — and the website will give you upper and lower “estimates” of what you might get

for it. Good fun — but, as with any of these sorts of sites, not to be taken literally.

If you have ever wondered how to make a lamp out of a fire extinguisher or how to rustle up a home-made solar panel, go to [instructables.com](http://instructables.com). All guides are written by users, a fair proportion of which come with “do not try this at home” warnings.

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Property clinic: for Q&As on buying, selling, home improvement and legal issues, go to: [timesonline.co.uk/propertyexperts](http://timesonline.co.uk/propertyexperts)

COVER PHOTOGRAPH: NICK RAY

## FOCUS ON . . .

**£226,000**

The average property price in Ripon

Source: Hometrack

**3%**

The decrease in property prices in Ripon over the first three months of this year

Source: Halifax

**159%**

The increase in property prices in Ripon over the past ten years

Source: Halifax

**178mm**

The total amount of rainfall in Ripon in June

Source: The Met Office

## Affluent greys

North Yorks **20.0%** (49,063 households)

Yorks & Humb **6.4%** (136,897)

UK **7.7%**

## 3+ cars

North Yorks **7.1%** (16,883 households)

Yorks & Humb **4.6%** (94,082)

UK **5.7%**

## Bird-watching

North Yorks **2.8%** (13,540 adults)

Yorks & Humb **1.8%** (74,233)

UK **2.1%**

Source: CACI [www.caci.co.uk](http://www.caci.co.uk)