

# Umbria residents warn medieval villages under threat from developers

**Locals in picturesque towns of Umbria are fighting to save the medieval villages popular with British holidaymakers that populate the area**



Orvieto, Umbria Photo: Rex Features



By [Alice Philipson](#), Rome

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The unspoilt medieval towns and beautiful wild countryside of Umbria have made it popular with British holidaymakers for years, but residents have warned the region is under attack from developers building a swathe of high-rise palazzos.

Local campaigners, lead by a retired economics professor, claim construction companies have been encroaching on the ancient towers, monasteries and villages of the Perugian countryside ever since a busy hospital and university moved into the area from the city centre. Over the last five years,

they say developers have taken advantage of the love to build unsightly new homes that are spoiling the character of the pretty hill towns, many of which retain impressive ruins from the Etruscan, Roman and medieval eras.



Stone buildings and cobblestone walkway under an arch in Spello, Umbria Photo: Rex Features

Now eight associations, including two national heritage protection groups, have come together to launch a campaign to “save the area from cement”.

Perversely, the launch of the campaign comes just months after the Ministry of Cultural Heritage granted special protection to 58 sq km of Umbrian land straddling Perugia and Marsciano.

But although the protection was granted in May, the comune of Marsciano and the region of Umbria launched legal action to reverse the law just two months later, in July.

In a 34-page dossier on the issue, Umbria wrote that the protection law contained elements that were “very detailed and restrictive and which had a strong impact on urban planning at a council level”.

Giuseppe Tullio, a former economics professor at the University of Brescia who now heads the Association for the Protection and Development of Contado di Porta Eburnea, an ancient Italian name for the area in dispute, has asked to represent the views of residents in court.

“In this area there are 13 or 14 incredibly beautiful medieval villages, and around 70 listed buildings that are little known outside of Umbria,” said Mr Tullio, who lives 7km south west of Perugia.



The village of Marsciano in Umbria Photo: Alamy

“After the hospital was moved the demand for housing in that area increased immeasurably and a lot of four or five -storey buildings sprung up. The land, which was relatively peaceful for about 2000 years, came under attack.

"I have asked the court to be allowed to express our point of view, which is that we want to defend the law that has listed this area." The group is holding a press conference on Saturday to spread word of the campaign. Italia Nostra and Legambiente, two high profile groups that work to protect Italy's cultural heritage, are supporting the initiative.

A spokesman for Umbria said the protection granted by central government prevented the region from rebuilding schools and other important community facilities.