

**HARGRAVE**

**HOUSING SITE ASSESSMENT**

**To accompany the**

**NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

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# **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report forms part of the evidence base for the Hargrave Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.2 The detailed assessment of proposed housing sites put forward through a 'Call for Sites' was carried out in November 2020.
- 1.3 The assessment explains how each of the proposed sites meets the criteria for designation as proposed housing site.

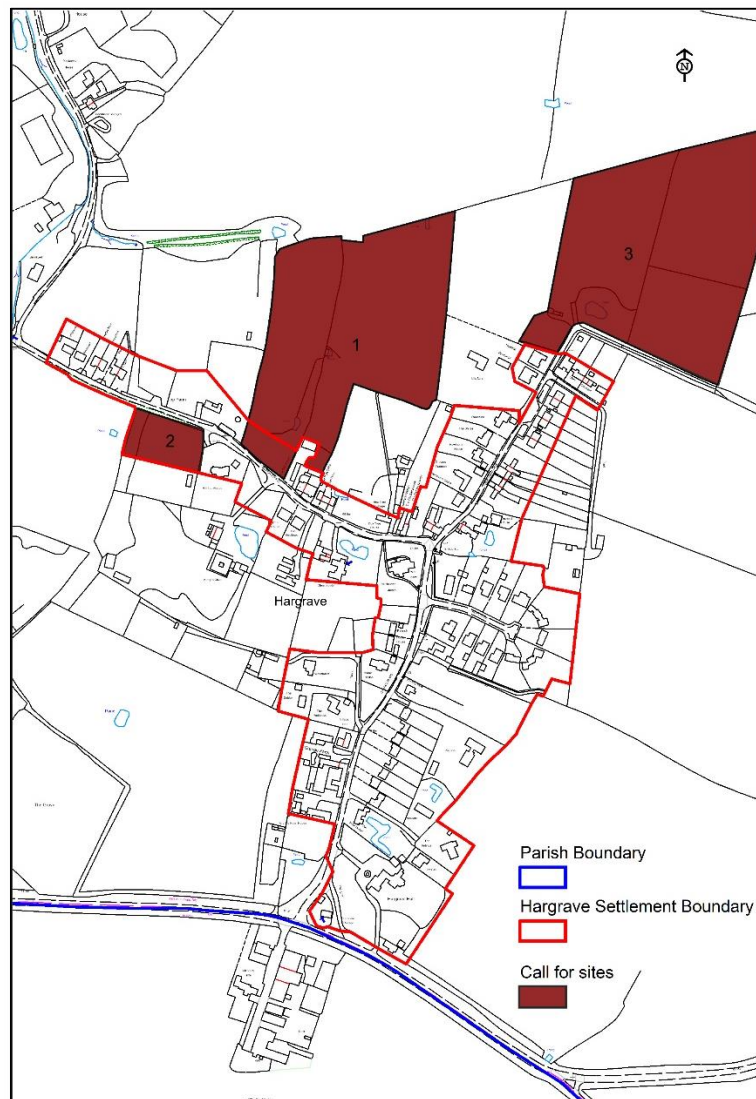
## 2. Site Appraisals

2.1 The following section includes the site appraisals for the sites for designation as housing sites in the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2 The sites included in this appraisal document are as follows:

Ref	Name
1	Land to the north of Church Street
2	Land to the south of Church Street
3	Land at top of Nags Head Lane

**Map of sites submitted**



## **1. Land North of Church Street between Top Farm and The Farmhouse.**

2.1.1 The land extends over more than two acres and lies between Top Farm and “The Farmhouse”, comprising two large fields which rise sharply from the road, running back beyond the current village dwellings into open countryside.

- The western field shares boundary with Top Farm.
- The eastern of these two fields is the L-shaped “ridge and furrow” field (behind Box Tree House). The applicant rightly notes this land is of historic significance, documented back to the 1600’s and crossed by two well-used public footpaths.
- There are two access points either side of The Farmhouse and a pedestrian access which leads between Box Tree Cottage and Box Tree House.

2.1.2 The landowner as yet has no specific proposals or plans for either of these fields, but kindly offers it for consideration within the Neighbourhood Plan process as a location potentially suited to future development of modest-sized homes, perhaps bungalows, and potentially offers an area of this land for public use within a development.

2.1.3 In this very early exploratory conversation there is as yet no indication of the size of any development in terms of numbers of properties, or specified location of properties within the site.

2.1.4 However, the applicant emphasises that her intentions in any development must not only be in keeping with the Village Plan, but also constitute a lasting amenity benefit for the village community, and provide an appropriate lasting memorial to her family’s long relationship with the village across more than a hundred years.

2.1.5 The applicant also underscored that any proposed property development should provide dwellings of a modest scale and number which would be

affordable to the average village resident and encourage/enable residents to remain in the village when considering a property move, rather than “executive” homes unaffordable to the average person or family.

2.1.6 The Steering Group endorses and thanks the applicant for clearly stating these intentions.

2.1.7 The Steering Group has carefully considered this location to the North side of Church Street and concludes:

- i. The ridge and furrow field, with its historic connections, established popular public footways and limited vehicular access lies physically and emotionally close to the heart of the village and villagers. It is identified as a highly valuable green space by the community. It lies behind the other houses on church street and is not viable for roadside infill. For these several reasons, the Steering Group considers that it should never be developed for housing.
- ii. However, the field immediately to the east of and adjacent to Top Farm enjoys roadside land which the Steering Group consider could be suitable for construction of a small number of modest, roadside properties which would then be in keeping with the pattern of development set out in the HNP.

2.1.8 To support a future development proposal, the Steering Group note that any roadside infill development on the westernmost of the two fields would need to fully comply with the requirements of the HNDP and successfully address key issues which include:

- Any development must remain within the limitations of the village settlement boundary.
- Any development should be of a limited number of modest scale, roadside properties in accordance with the indications of the HNDP.

- Housing should therefore only be positioned along the roadside (i.e. roadside infill) with no plans for (and avoiding opportunity to create) later backfill development of the field. It must therefore remain within the village settlement boundary as drafted.
- Provision of a singular safe roadside access with good visibility onto Church Street is essential
- Provision of ample off-road parking for the homes and their visitors in order to avoid congestion of Church Street.
- Importantly, sustainable design of the development would place least pressure on existing village infrastructure and drainage. Moreover, any development of additional property within the village must be responsible for demonstrating independent verification of whether or not the existing infrastructure (e.g., foul and storm drainage) has capacity capable of meeting future need before proceeding. At the least, these should be sustainable properties with low energy, low water use (and therefore low impact on utility infrastructure).
- In considering sustainability, any development must be self-sufficient in relation to storm water run-off, through the use of porous materials such as block paving for driveways and rainwater harvesting for the homes. Other sustainable technologies should be considered to create a low impact on utility infrastructure.
- The overall architectural style and layout of any development on this section of land in the village must be very carefully considered as there has not been any residential development here since the mid-19th century. Top Farm lies to the West and the Post Office Cottages and Box Tree Cottage are to the East - all of which have significant architectural and historic merit within Hargrave village. The nature of any development must complement and enhance this historic part of Church Street which contains some of the village's remaining pre-20th century architecture and rural appearance. By way of illustration, the Steering Group considered that rather than this site holding an aspiration for "modest bungalows", a sympathetic proposal more akin to "cottages" or "terraced cottages" could furnish a better considered proposition for this site.

Site summary:

- 2.1.9 The purpose of the Call for Sites within the HNP is positively to identify those locations within the village with potential for sympathetic development of a limited number of new homes that comply with the express requirements of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan, and its recognition that only very modest village growth should occur within the next two decades.
- 2.1.10 In this context of points 1 and 2 above, the Steering Group unanimously agrees that the roadside portion of the western field which lies within the village settlement boundary could be sympathetically developed in a manner that would fully comply with the policies of the HNBP.
- 2.1.11 This roadside location is therefore allocated within the HNBP for possible future development as a modest part of the village plan provision for gentle potential growth over the coming two decades.



## **2. Land South of Church Street opposite Top Farm.**

- 2.2.1 This site has been proposed for development by a local property developer with previous experience and good track record of working in smaller communities where they built sympathetic, well thought out architectural designs.
- 2.2.2 The submission put forward for consideration two different illustrative layouts. The first includes a mixture of semi-detached homes and terraced cottages; the second is all semi-detached homes. Whilst neither plan is likely to constitute a final layout, the drawings clearly illustrated the intent for the site. In both schemes the developer has shown a total of 8 dwellings.
- 2.2.3 The Steering Group considered the proposed layouts and the context of the proposed site carefully.
- 2.2.4 Both of the proposals are well thought out, with the developer taking account of feedback from the village survey.
- 2.2.5 Ahead of making any planning submission, the developer confirmed their intent to work within the Neighbourhood Plan process and produce an outcome that is fully compliant with the intent of the village as expressed within the final neighbourhood plan.
- 2.2.6 Whilst indicative at this early stage of development design, the numbers of dwellings demonstrate the likely capacity of the site. The developer appreciates the final numbers could be between 4 to 8 properties, depending on housing need and type in any final planning application. The developer is of course aware there will be planning obligations to be met.
- 2.2.7 In reviewing the proposed site and considering its suitability for development, the Steering Group noted:
- i. The proposed development lies within the village settlement boundary.

- ii. The proposed development is purely a roadside development in keeping with the express preference of villagers, and the policies of the HNP.
- iii. The development provides modest scale of houses suited to the requirements of the village as identified through the village survey.
- iv. The layouts shown propose a single access point off the highway which helps to mitigate the traffic impact of the scheme.
- v. The designs incorporate parking areas at the rear of the properties, thereby avoiding the need for roadside parking or consequent congestion of Church Street – two factors important to many residents and farmers when it comes to road safety and environment.
- vi. In terms of sustainability, the developer confirmed the development will be self-sufficient in relation to storm water run-off, through the use of porous materials such as block paving for driveways and utilising rainwater harvesting for the homes. Bird boxes and hedgehog friendly fencing are also incorporated as further sustainability examples.
- vii. The sustainable design of the development would place little pressure on existing village storm drainage. Nonetheless any development of additional property within the village must be responsible for demonstrating independent verification of whether the existing infrastructure (e.g., foul and storm drainage) has capacity capable of meeting future need before proceeding. This should remain the case for this development too.
- viii. The developer is amenable to adjusting the mix of housing types and suiting their architecture to reflect the historic nature of many of the Church Street properties through providing a blend of terraced cottages and semi-detached homes in a sympathetic architectural style.

2.2.8 To support a future development proposal, the Steering Group note that any development would need to fully comply with the requirements of the HNDF and successfully address key issues which include:

- The properties as designed in outline sit close to the roadside and lack some of the welcome soft screening and front garden style that characterises many of Hargrave's existing properties.

- The Steering Group remained concerned that the illustrative layouts both leave accessible land at the rear of the site, which lies outside the proposed settlement boundary. Even with a Neighbourhood Plan in place, this fallow area holds future risk for the community in that it may be put forward with planning for a backfill development at some time after the proposed houses are completed. This would be unacceptable.
- Therefore, the Steering Group consider there is merit in exploring with the developer how the properties could be moved a little further back from the highway, in line with the adjacent Hill Top House, thereby creating a larger open space area at the front of the properties either for gardens or even a communal use area and precluding further development to their rear.
- The architectural style of any development on this section of land in the village must be very carefully considered. Top Farm stands opposite, and the Post Office Cottages and Box Tree Cottage lie to the East: all of these properties provide architectural merit and enjoyable charm. The nature of any new development along Church Street therefore must complement and enhance this historic part of Church Street which contains some of the village's remaining pre-20th century architecture and provide a distinctly rural appearance. This sensitivity and a commitment to architectural treatment are matters that the developer indicates they fully appreciate, offering examples from their home building in Olney by way of evidence of their commitment to appropriately sympathetic architectural treatment in their designs.
- The sustainability of the properties should be enhanced by the incorporation of energy generation (solar panels to their south facing rear elevations and/or ground source heat pumps).

## Site Summary

2.2.9 The purpose of the Call for Sites within the HNPD is simply to identify those locations within the village with potential for sympathetic development of a limited number of new homes that comply with the express requirements of the

Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan, and its recognition that only very modest village growth should occur within the next two decades.

2.2.10 In this context, for the reasons given in notes 1-8 above, the Steering Group unanimously agrees that these submitted proposals clearly demonstrate how a future development at this location within the village settlement boundary might fully comply with the policies of the HNBP.

2.2.11 This location to the south side of Church Street is therefore considered suitable by the Steering Group and allocated within the next draft of the HNBP as a possible site for future new houses in the village, accommodating a maximum of eight well-designed modest scale properties as a major part of the village's identified potential for future growth.

### **3. Land at the top of Nags Head Lane**

2.3.1 This area extends to around 21 acres in total, which the landowner considered could be ideal for a small holding with a suitable single dwelling.

2.3.2 This proposition and its location were considered carefully by the Steering Group, who unanimously concluded that this large tract of agricultural land is not suitable for development of a dwelling(s) for the following reasons which conflict with the policies and intent of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan:

- i. Location: The location rests entirely outside the village settlement boundary in the plan.
- ii. Disposition: This is not a proposal for roadside infill in keeping with the village preference and HNP policies.
- iii. Vehicular access: Vehicle access to the property will necessarily need to be created over the existing public bridleway at the top of Nag's Head Lane and will reduce rural amenity for the villagers.
- iv. Loss of Amenity: Opening up these fields for development of a single dwelling outside the settlement boundary will encroach on green space which has been identified through the village survey and HNP consultation processes as holding valuable amenity to residents.
- v. Encroachment: Development on this site encroaches on farmland and would set precedent for development of a further open countryside lying outside the village settlement boundary. This would be completely unacceptable and irretrievably damage the character of the village as a whole.
- vi. Traffic concerns: There has been a considerable number of new houses developed along Nag's Head Lane in recent years. This single-track steep Nag's Head Lane is now always congested by roadside parking and vehicles, whilst the entrance/exit to the lane is on a right angle bend in the heart of the village. Introducing additional traffic flows along the whole length of Lane is not considered a step in keeping with the HNP.

- vii. Housing Need: There is no need for further growth of the village beyond the village settlement boundary. The requisite levels of development can be accommodated within the village settlement boundary.

2.3.3 Aside from the reasons given above, the HNDR steering group also considered that were a planning application ever to be made for this site, there might be a number of other issues to be considered by the planning authorities as to whether or not the land would support an application for an agricultural tied property; noting that the landowner recently replaced a dwelling in Nags Head Lane inhabited by the last active farmer of this proposed site, with the development of two purely residential properties. However, these complications would properly be for the planning authorities to consider, rather than the HNDR Steering Group.

#### Site Summary:

2.3.41 The purpose of the Call for Sites within the processes of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) is positively to identify those locations within the village with potential for sympathetic development of a limited number of new homes that comply with the express requirements of the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan, and its recognition that only very modest village growth should occur within the next two decades.

2.3.5 In the context of the points 1-7 above, the Steering Group unanimously agrees that the prospect of developing this portion of agricultural land, which lies outside the settlement boundary beyond the end of Nag's Head Lane, is not in keeping with the premise of the HNP and therefore makes no allocation for this proposal within the HNP.

### 3. Conclusions

4.1 In summary the results of the assessment are that two sites will be allocated in the HNDP for future housing development. These are as follows:

Site 1 – a section of land to the north of Church Street

Site 2 – land to the south of Church Street

**Map of allocated sites**

