

Statement by Hargrave Parish Council

In support of the refusal of planning permission by West Suffolk Council for:

“Outline planning application (means of access to be considered) – one dwelling”

Moat Farm, Wickhambrook Road, Hargrave, IP29 5HY

LPA Reference: DC/21/0740/OUT

Appeal Reference: APP/F3545/W/21/3287168

Prepared for Hargrave Parish Council
by Places4People Planning Consultancy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Places4People Planning Consultancy on behalf of Hargrave Parish Council. The Parish Council previously submitted objections to the application to West Suffolk Council which were registered on the planning application portal on 10 May 2021. This statement does not repeat the content of the original objection, as this is already before the Inspector and remains valid. It does, however, specifically address the content of the appellant's Statement of Case dated November 2021.

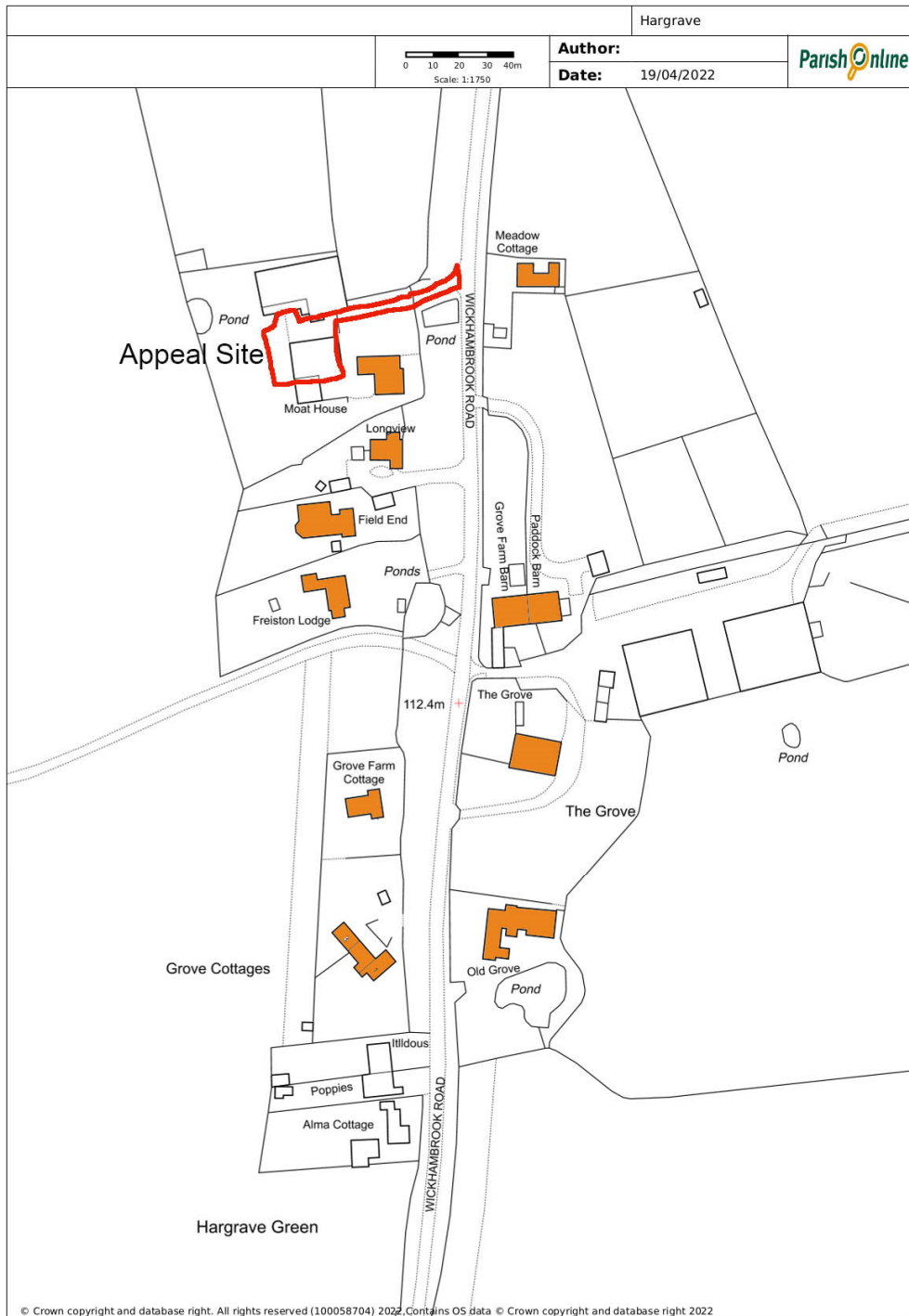
2. Parish Council's Response to Appellant's Statement of Case

- 2.1 It is noted that the appellant focuses on the proposal being a sustainable development that would accord with paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy DM27 of the West Suffolk Development Management Policies Local Plan document (2015). The Statement of Case contends that:
- i. the site is within a closely knit cluster of 10 or more dwellings and therefore accords with Policy DM27;
 - ii. the proposed dwelling would have "the appearance of a converted traditional outbuilding";
 - iii. future residents would have access to public transport links; and
 - iv. the proposal would help to sustain the vitality and viability of important local services including the public houses at Ousden and Chevington which are within walking distance of the appeal site.

We deal in turn with these ascertains below.

Policy DM27

- 2.2 The key constituent of Policy DM27 is its requirement for proposal for new dwellings to be within a closely knit 'cluster' of 10 or more existing dwellings. As can be seen from the map below, the site is in fact located on the edge of a cluster of dwellings which themselves can hardly be described as "close knit". Development would, instead, result in a northern extension of a cluster of dwellings which is poorly connected to the centre of the village.



Map 1 – Location of the appeal site (red line) and nearby dwellings (orange)

2.3 The development of this site would also preclude the future use of the vacant (but last used) business unit on the northern edge of the site. That lawful use remains and if this development were allowed then it is difficult to understand how that business unit would be accessed and how it could continue to function in accordance with Policy DM30 of the Development Management Policies Local Plan document. It is more likely, given the condition and appearance of those buildings, that a further application would arise seeking their demolition and a further dwelling in this unsustainable location.

- 2.4 The appellant refers (in paragraph 30 of their Statement) to an appeal on a site at Great Barton as being allowed. However, we argue that the circumstances in this case were totally different in that, as that Inspector acknowledged, that site was a five minutes' walk along a road with a footway to the village which is defined in the Local Plan as a Local Service Centre with a school, post office, shop and regular bus services. The site at Hargrave does not benefit from any of these and the nearest Local Service Centres are at Barrow (2.5 miles to the north) and Wickhambrook (3.5 miles to the south). Neither are served by bus services that would allow the use of these services.
- 2.5 In paragraph 30 of their Statement they refer to a case at Flempton which was allowed on appeal. The difference in that instance is that the site had footway access to a bus stop which has the benefit of hourly bus services to Bury St Edmunds. There is no footway between the appellant's site and the bus stop, even if there were regular and convenient services from it.

Appearance of the dwelling

- 2.6 The appellant's Statement identifies that the proposal would have "the appearance of a converted traditional outbuilding" replacing what is described as an unattractive commercial building. These elements of the Statement should be ignored as the application is in outline and does not address details of design of the new dwelling. Should the appeal be allowed, it would provide approval in principle for the construction of a dwelling on this site and there would be no requirement for it to have "the appearance of a converted traditional outbuilding".
- 2.7 The Inspector is asked to set aside this element of the appellant's Statement of Case.

Access to public transport

- 2.8 The appellant's Statement acknowledges that the bus services in Hargrave are "limited" but does not reflect just how limited these are. Service 14B and 15A operates only during term time departing at 08.00 Monday to Friday to Bury St Edmunds and returning from Bury St Edmunds Bus Station at 15.20 and a further service from St Benedicts Catholic School in Bury St Edmunds at 15.55. There is only one service to Haverhill, departing at 16.29 and no return service.
- 2.9 Consequently, residents cannot rely on using bus services to access health and shopping facilities in nearby villages and trips to Bury St Edmunds would require stays of almost 7 hours in the town before a return bus is available.
- 2.10 The Statement also states that the site is within 1km of bus stops in Chevington. This is in fact an error as it is **1 mile** from the site to the bus stops in Chevington. The route to these bus stops is along roads that, primarily, have the national speed limit and have no footways. As such it is not a safe or attractive walking route and, for cycling, there are no secure cycle parking facilities at the bus stop.
- 2.11 The Inspector is asked to set aside the comments in paragraph 35 of the appellant's Statement that "future residents...would not be wholly reliant on the use of the private car".

Sustaining local services

- 2.12 The appellant's Statement suggests that the development "would help to sustain the vitality and viability of important local services including the public houses at Chevington and Ousden". One additional dwelling is, we suggest, unlikely to help the vitality and viability of public houses located between one and two miles away via country lanes which have the national speed limit and no footways for safe walking. The nearest higher order settlements are at Wickhambrook and Barrow. Both settlements have a doctor's surgery, primary school and shop but, as demonstrated above, cannot be accessed by return bus services. Occupants of the new dwelling would therefore be reliant on the use of the private car to access all services.
- 2.13 The proposal is therefore in conflict with paragraph 79 of the NPPF in that it will not support the services in a nearby village in a sustainable way as such journeys would be reliant on the private motor car.
- 2.14 The Inspector is asked to set aside the comments in paragraph 36 of the appellant's Statement that the proposal "would help to sustain the vitality and viability of important local services including the public houses at Chevington and Ousden"

Other matters

- 2.15 Paragraph 26 of the appellant's Statement refers to the Hargrave Neighbourhood Plan. It states that Policy HAR1 "does not state that development outside the main built-up area will be refused". To state otherwise would be contrary to the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF and would have failed the Basic Conditions. But it should not be assumed that this policy encourages new housing outside the Settlement Boundary.
- 2.16 The same paragraph of the Statement states that Policy HAR2 "does not state that proposals for dwellings outside the [settlement] boundary will be refused." Again, to have stated otherwise would have been contrary to the Local Plan and the NPPF.

3. Conclusions

- 3.1 The Parish Council maintains its objection to the proposal for the reasons set out in comments registered by West Suffolk Council on 10 May 2021. In particular the proposal is contrary to Policy DM27 of the West Suffolk Development Management Policies Local Plan document (2015) in that the site is not within a closely knit 'cluster' of 10 or more existing dwellings and occupants would be reliant on the use of the private car to access day-to-day services and facilities.
- 3.2 The Parish Council therefore requests that the appeal is dismissed.