

# **Sporle with Palgrave Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base**



St. Mary's Church, Sporle (2017)  
Source: Mat Fascione - Geograph Britain and Ireland. Licensed under Creative Commons

**July 2026**

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## Evidence Base Summary and Key Issues

| Population Characteristics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parish has seen a 7% increase in population between the 2011 and 2021 Census.</li> <li>• The majority of the parish population (47%) are working age adults (25-64).</li> <li>• The parish has an older than average population for Norfolk with an above average distribution of ages 50+ and a below average distribution of ages 0-49.</li> <li>• The population profile has moved further towards the older age groups with the over 65s now making up 34% of the population in 2021 (Norfolk average 25%).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an ageing population which may indicate a need for more smaller housing within the parish, to cater for people wanting to downsize.</li> <li>• There may also be a need for specialist housing for older people.</li> <li>• The majority of the parish are working age adults suggesting a need for future housing to meet a variety of needs and life stages: renters, first time buyers and families.</li> </ul> |
| Housing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sporle with Palgrave has a higher proportion of home ownership and a lower proportion of private renters when compared to the rest of Norfolk.</li> <li>• There are a mix of household sizes in the parish, and the majority are made up of one or two people.</li> <li>• The average (mean) sold house price in 2025 was £255,263.</li> <li>• The Breckland Local Plan allocates land northeast of Essex Farm for residential development of at least 35 dwellings.</li> <li>• The emerging Breckland Local Plan has proposed two new allocations totalling 60 dwellings in their preferred options consultation.</li> <li>• The Local Plan requires provision of open space as part of the development as well as other criteria that must be met.</li> <li>• Since 2013 a total of 44 new dwellings have been built in the parish.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future housing should provide a mix of types, sizes and tenures that responds to local needs.</li> <li>• New development should help provide opportunities for younger households and families, while also supporting older residents who wish to remain in the parish.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          |
| Availability of local services, employment, and accessibility                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some local services in the parish: a shop, Post Office, primary school and associated playgroup, churches and a community centre.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional housing could support the ongoing viability of existing local services or the creation of new ones.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents need to travel to nearby towns to access some services such as GP, dentist, hospitals, secondary education, banks and rail services.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Transport and Connectivity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most households have access to a private car/van, with the proportion of people not having one very low.</li> <li>Public transport provides some weekday and Saturday connections to nearby towns, including Swaffham and Dereham, but services are limited, with no evening provision and reduced options outside weekday daytime periods.</li> <li>Most people who travel to work from the parish do so using a private car which likely reflects the limited availability of public transport options in the village as well as the distance travelled to work by residents.</li> <li>There is access into the countryside for recreational purposes including footpaths/bridleways and the national trail the Peddars Way runs through the parish offering long distance off-road access to the countryside.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public transport is not available during evenings and weekends, limiting access to nearby towns for shift workers and for leisure purposes.</li> <li>On street parking is an issue.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Flood Risk</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is little risk of fluvial flooding in the parish.</li> <li>Surface water flooding is the main flood risk issue, particularly along parts of The Street and close to the watercourse running through the village.</li> <li>The Breckland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 does not identify specific flood risk issues for Sporle with Palgrave, and there are no LLFA flood investigation reports for the parish.</li> <li>Community consultation identified drainage and flooding as local concerns.</li> <li>There is no consistent local information available on groundwater flood risk, so groundwater should be</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                          | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development should be located and designed so that it does not increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere.</li> <li>Development should use sustainable drainage and water-sensitive design to manage surface water run-off, improve water quality, support biodiversity, and help adapt to climate change.</li> <li>Existing ditches, watercourses and natural drainage features should be retained and maintained where possible.</li> <li>Particular care is needed in areas already shown to be at medium or high risk of surface water flooding.</li> </ul> |

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| considered where site conditions indicate it may be relevant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Natural Environment</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are no statutory ecological designations within the neighbourhood area.</li> <li>• There are important designated sites close to the parish, including Castle Acre Common SSSI, River Nar SSSI, Breckland SPA and Breckland Forest SSSI.</li> <li>• Sporle Wood is a County Wildlife Site and ancient woodland within the parish.</li> <li>• The parish contains priority habitat, principally deciduous woodland.</li> <li>• Woodland, hedgerows, trees, green spaces, ditches, field margins and the stream corridor contribute to local habitat connectivity.</li> <li>• The Norfolk LNRS Local Habitat Map identifies one Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity immediately east/north-east of Sporle, associated with woodland close to Sporle Wood.</li> <li>• The LNRS also identifies a wider network of Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity around the village and surrounding countryside.</li> <li>• The most relevant local nature recovery opportunities are likely to relate to woodland, hedgerows, field margins, ditches, green spaces and linear habitat connections.</li> <li>• The built-up village is not generally mapped as an LNRS biodiversity opportunity area, but several mapped areas lie close to the settlement edge.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development should avoid harm to County Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland, priority habitats and existing habitat networks.</li> <li>• Development should retain and strengthen existing trees, hedgerows, ditches, watercourses and green infrastructure wherever possible.</li> <li>• Biodiversity net gain should respond to local opportunities and help improve habitat connectivity.</li> <li>• New development should be designed to avoid fragmenting habitats and should take opportunities to support nature recovery.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Plan should take account of the Norfolk LNRS by recognising the mapped biodiversity network around Sporle and supporting policies that protect and strengthen existing habitats and connections.</li> <li>• Particular care is needed where development is close to mapped LNRS areas, ancient woodland, County Wildlife Sites, priority habitat or existing linear habitat features.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Dark Skies</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the neighbourhood plan area benefits from dark skies at night.</li> <li>• A small part of the parish in the south-western corner of the neighbourhood plan area close to the A47 has brighter skies.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preserving the existing low levels of light pollution could be important in the design of any future development.</li> <li>• Future development which can help to limit light pollution rather than add to the issue in the parts of the parish close to the A47 would be beneficial.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |



| <b>Landscape Character</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The parish falls within an area characterised by flat agricultural landscapes, big skies, open views and rural character.</li> <li>• Sporle with Palgrave's history is as an agricultural village and is now characterised as a rural continuous row village.</li> <li>• The village has a strong relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape, with visual links to open countryside, mature vegetation, green gaps, grass verges and rural settlement edges contributing to local character.</li> <li>• St Mary's Church, Sporle Wood, the stream along The Street, hedgerows, trees and open farmland are important features of the local landscape.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open rural views across the landscape with churches as visible landmarks are a key feature of the area and should be preserved.</li> <li>• The scale of potential future development should be considered particularly with regard to its effects on long views, skylines and surrounding character areas.</li> <li>• Preservation of green space is important and should be a consideration for infill development.</li> <li>• Development that does not incorporate local materials may not blend well with the character of the area.</li> </ul>                     |
| <b>Historic Environment</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are five listed buildings and one scheduled monument within the neighbourhood area.</li> <li>• The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is a prominent historic landmark within the village and in views across the surrounding countryside.</li> <li>• The deserted medieval village at Great Palgrave is a scheduled monument and demonstrates the long history of settlement in the parish.</li> <li>• The historic linear form of Sporle along The Street, together with older buildings, grass verges, stream crossings, mature trees and the relationship with surrounding farmland, contributes to the parish's local character.</li> </ul>                           | <p><b>Issues:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development has the potential to affect the setting and significance of designated heritage assets, particularly where it would affect St Mary's Church, the historic core of Sporle, or views towards heritage landmarks.</li> <li>• Design, layout, scale, materials and landscaping are important in ensuring that new development responds positively to the historic character of the parish.</li> <li>• Known archaeological assets, including the scheduled deserted medieval village at Great Palgrave, should be taken into account where relevant.</li> </ul> |

## Introduction

This evidence base is a live document in the sense that it will be updated as new evidence emerges during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. It primarily draws on data and information that is available on the internet, such as government or local government data or information. The evidence base utilises both quantitative and qualitative data to build a rich picture of the local area. Most of the data is quantitative and is therefore in the form of data and statistics, such as the number of residents or the number of three bedroomed homes. Some of the evidence is qualitative, such as a description of the services and facilities that exist in the parish.

The purpose of the evidence base is to identify planning issues and provide the justification for the planning policies that will make up the neighbourhood plan. Some evidence is very clearly useful for developing policies. For example, if there is a lack of smaller dwellings (2 or 3 bedroomed) then the neighbourhood plan can have a policy that requires more smaller dwellings. The document doesn't include all available information. The aim is to include only data and information that will be utilised for the neighbourhood plan. For example, there is data on CO2 emissions from buildings, but planning can have little bearing on this because it falls under the Building Regulations regime, which deals with the environmental performance of new buildings such as the level of insulation or the use of solar panels. Whilst the neighbourhood plan should be made up of planning policies, these policies should not repeat what is already set out in national planning policies or policies in the local plan, though it can sometimes have a distinctive local version. There are some policy areas that are generally already covered by these national or local plan policies. For example, the protection given to landscape protection areas (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks etc). Although a neighbourhood plan has little role to play in the protection of national landscape designations, it is still worth including such evidence as it is useful context that helps people to gain a greater understanding of their area.

There is a glossary provided at the end of the document to help to explain any technical terms used in the evidence base. Where there are definitions used by government or other regulatory bodies that are relevant to planning, we have included them in the glossary. For example, how flood risk zones are defined and categorised or the Government's definition of affordable housing.

## Sporle with Palgrave parish in context

Sporle with Palgrave is a small parish in the west of Norfolk, in the District of Breckland, 3 miles north-east of Swaffham (10 minutes by car) located relatively close to the A47. Dereham is 11 miles east along the A47 (20 minutes by car). Downham Market is approximately 19 miles south-west (30 minutes by car) whilst the large town of King's Lynn is the same distance to the north-west of Sporle. The parish includes Palgrave Great and Little as well as Cotes Common and Petygards which lie to the south of the parish, separated from Sporle by the A47. Sporle and Great and Little Palgrave are all mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 and the parish has a rich history reaching back to Anglo-Saxon times<sup>1</sup> The Norfolk Heritage Explorer notes that the name Sporle comes from Old English meaning 'clearing with

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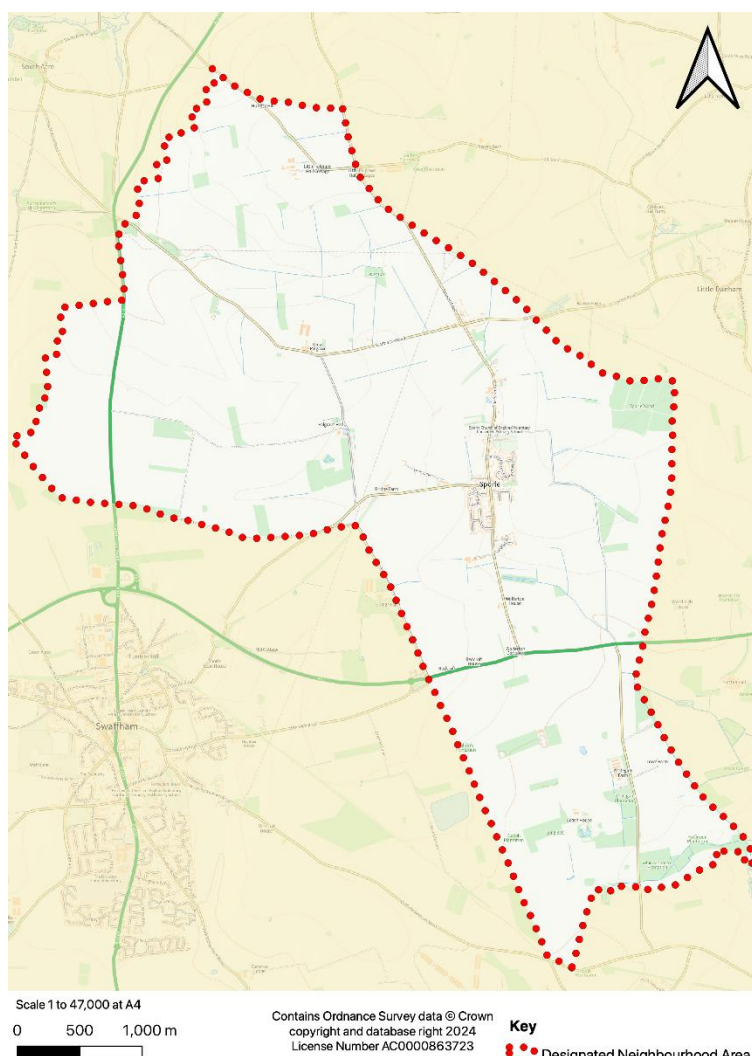
<sup>1</sup> Sporle with Palgrave History Group - [introduction](#). Accessed 12/02/2024



an enclosure'. Palgrave comes from Old English meaning 'Paga's grove or copse'. It also states that "Sporle and Palgrave were originally separate parishes, each with their own church before they were combined into a unified parish. Both Sporle and Palgrave have a long history and were well established by the time of the Norman Conquest. Their population, land ownership and productive resources were detailed separately in the Domesday Book of 1086. This document mentions that Sporle was a royal manor with woodland and that Palgrave was held for the king by Godric and possessed a mill"<sup>2</sup>. Today Sporle is a small community with a population of 1,089, served by a village shop/Post Office, primary school, churches, and village hall/community centre. There are lots of community groups/clubs and the village has a playing field, pavilion and children's playground managed by trustees/volunteers<sup>3</sup>.

The designated Neighbourhood Plan Area is shown below:

*Figure 1: Designated Neighbourhood Plan Area - Sporle with Palgrave*



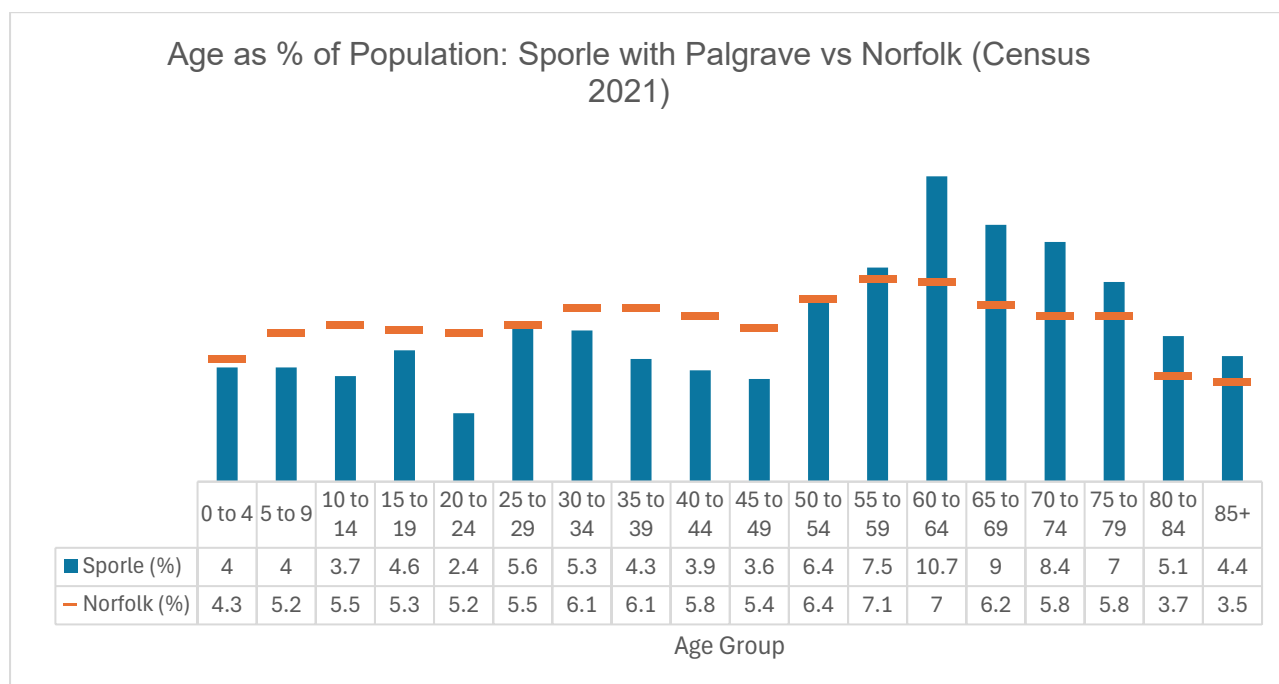
<sup>2</sup> Norfolk Heritage Explorer – [parish summary Sporle with Palgrave](#). Accessed 24/02/2024

<sup>3</sup> Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council [website](#). Accessed 12/02/2024

## Population Characteristics

According to the 2021 Census, the total resident population of Sporle with Palgrave is 1,089 people living in 479 households<sup>4</sup> which is a 7% increase from the 2011 census when there were 1,011 usual residents<sup>5</sup>. It is also an increase in population from the 2001 Census when there were 1,038 people in the parish. Census 2021 data shows that Sporle with Palgrave has an older age profile when compared to the rest of Norfolk with above average distribution of ages 55+ and below average distribution of ages 0-49<sup>6</sup>. This is shown below:

Figure 2: Sporle with Palgrave population age profile vs Norfolk - Census 2021



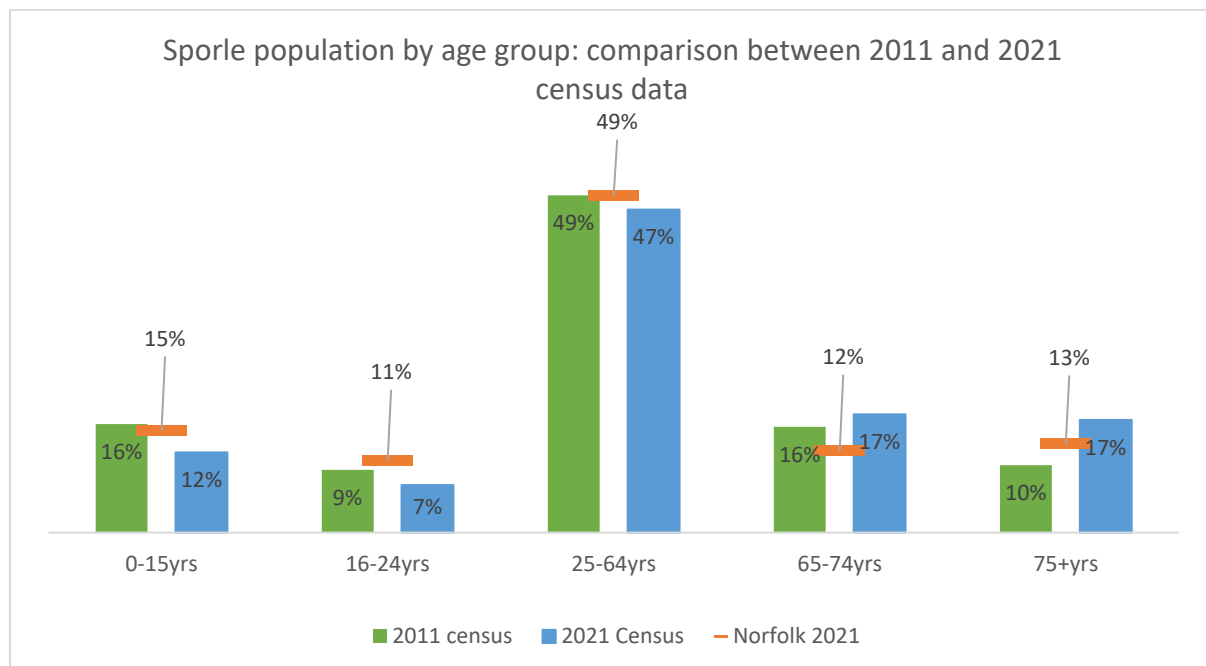
The majority of the parish population (47%) are in the 25-64 age bracket representing adults of working age. However, in the ten years between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses, the population profile of Sporle with Palgrave grew slightly older, with a small drop in the proportion of the population in the younger age groups and a small rise in the proportion of the population in the older age groups. The 65 and over population now makes up 34% of the parish compared to 26% in 2011 and the Norfolk average of 25%. More detail can be seen below:

<sup>4</sup> The 2021 Census figures used in this Evidence Base are taken from the ONS/Nomis parish-level Census 2021 dataset for Sporle with Palgrave. These figures may differ slightly from figures used in some supporting studies where data has been assembled using Output Areas or proxy geographies. The ONS/Nomis parish-level figures have been used here as they relate directly to the parish geography. Office of National Statistics census 2021 – [build a custom profile](#). Accessed 07/07/2026

<sup>5</sup> Census 2011. Nomis Local Area Report for Sporle with Palgrave. Source: [Local Area Report for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Office of National Statistics census 2021 – [build a custom profile](#). Accessed 07/07/2026

Figure 3: Sporle with Palgrave population age profile 2011 vs. 2021 vs Norfolk average - Census data



### Summary:

- The parish has seen a 7% increase in population between the 2011 and 2021 Census.
- The majority of the parish population (47%) are working age adults (25-64).
- The parish has an older than average population for Norfolk with an above average distribution of ages 50+ and a below average distribution of ages 0-49.
- The population profile has moved further towards the older age groups with the over 65s now making up 34% of the population in 2021 (Norfolk average 25%).

### Issues:

- There is an ageing population which may indicate a need for more smaller housing within the parish, to cater for people wanting to downsize.
- There may also be a need for specialist housing for older people.
- The majority of the parish are working age adults suggesting a need for future housing to meet a variety of needs and life stages: renters, first time buyers and families.

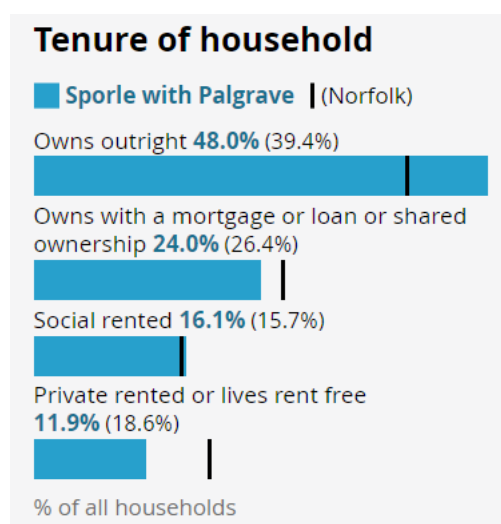
## Housing

### Census data

According to the 2021 Census data there are 480 households in the parish. Compared to the rest of Norfolk, Sporle with Palgrave has a higher than average proportion of residents who own their home outright (48% compared to 40%). The

parish has a low proportion of residents living in privately rented properties when compared to the rest of Norfolk (12% vs 19%).

Figure 4: Household tenure Sporle with Palgrave vs Norfolk (Source: Census 2021)



There have been small changes in the ten years since the 2011 Census when there were 453 households of which 42% were owned outright (fewer than in 2021) and 27% were owned with a mortgage/loan (more than in 2021). There was little change in the proportion of renters<sup>7</sup>.

2021 Census data shows<sup>8</sup> that almost all of the dwellings in the parish are houses or bungalows (99%) with flats/apartments/maisonettes making up less than 1%. The percentage of houses/bungalows in the parish is higher than the Norfolk (86%) and England average (77%) and the percentage of flats/maisonettes/apartments is lower than both the Suffolk (13%) and England averages (22%).

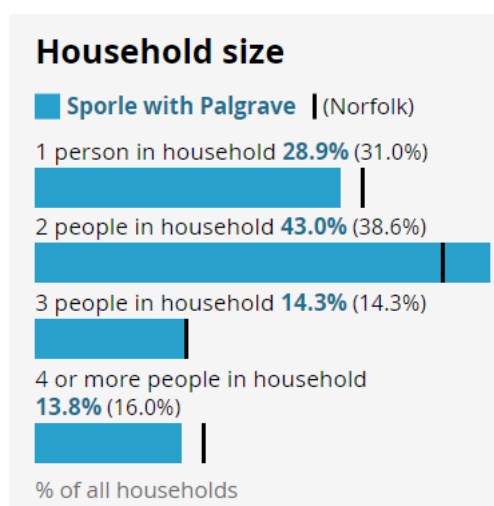
Regarding household size, the Census 2021 shows<sup>9</sup> that 66% of households in the parish are made up of 2 or more people, considered as a single family household. These are households made up of couples, single parents, family members living together or couples with children (dependent or non-dependent). The most common household size is 2 people in a household (43%) with three-person households making up 14% and four or more person households making up the same proportion (14%). In Sporle with Palgrave 29% of households are one person households which is a little lower than the Norfolk average (31%). Overall, we can see that in the parish whilst there is a mix of household sizes, over 70% of households have 1 or 2 people. This should be considered when planning for future housing needs.

<sup>7</sup> Census 2011. Nomis Local Area Report for Sporle with Palgrave. Source: [Local Area Report for areas in England and Wales - Nomis \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/)

<sup>8</sup> Office of National Statistics census 2021 – [build a custom profile](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/). Accessed 15/02/2024

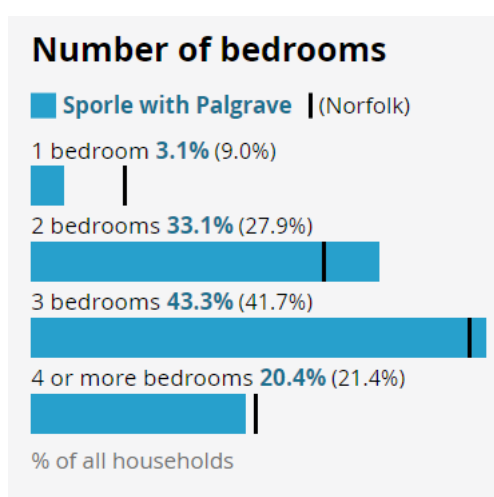
<sup>9</sup> Office of National Statistics census 2021 – [build a custom profile](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/). Accessed 15/02/2024

Figure 5: Household size Sporle with Palgrave vs Norfolk (Source: Census 2021)



The 2021 census shows that the majority of homes in the parish have 3 bedrooms (43%) which is broadly in line with the average for Norfolk (42%).

Figure 6: Number of bedrooms Sporle with Palgrave vs Norfolk (Source: Census 2021)



Comparing census data from 2011 and 2021 shows that there have been some changes during the ten years to 2021 in the number of bedrooms, with an increase in the proportion of homes that have 3 or more bedrooms and a decrease in the proportion that have one or two bedrooms. This change in number of bedrooms doesn't necessarily reflect changes in household sizes in the ten years 2011-2021 as shown in the chart below. There hasn't been an increase in households with 3 or more people although there has been an increase in one person households. The increase in home working since the 2020 pandemic means more people need additional room space in their homes to accommodate home working/home office space and this may be part of the picture.

Figure 7: Sporle with Palgrave household size number of bedrooms 2011 vs 2021 Census data

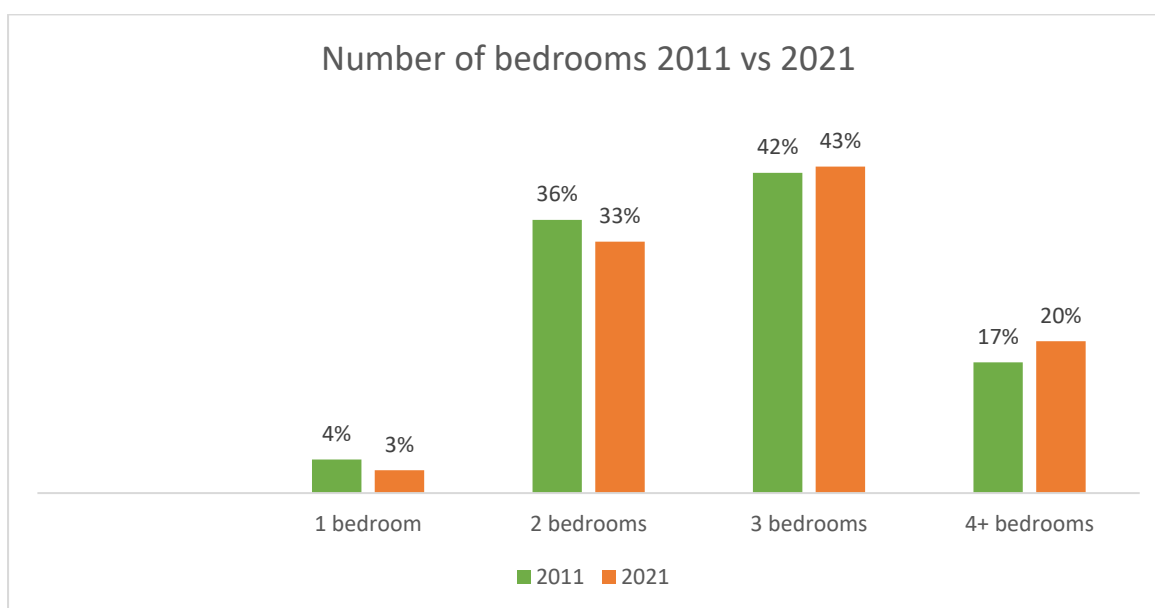
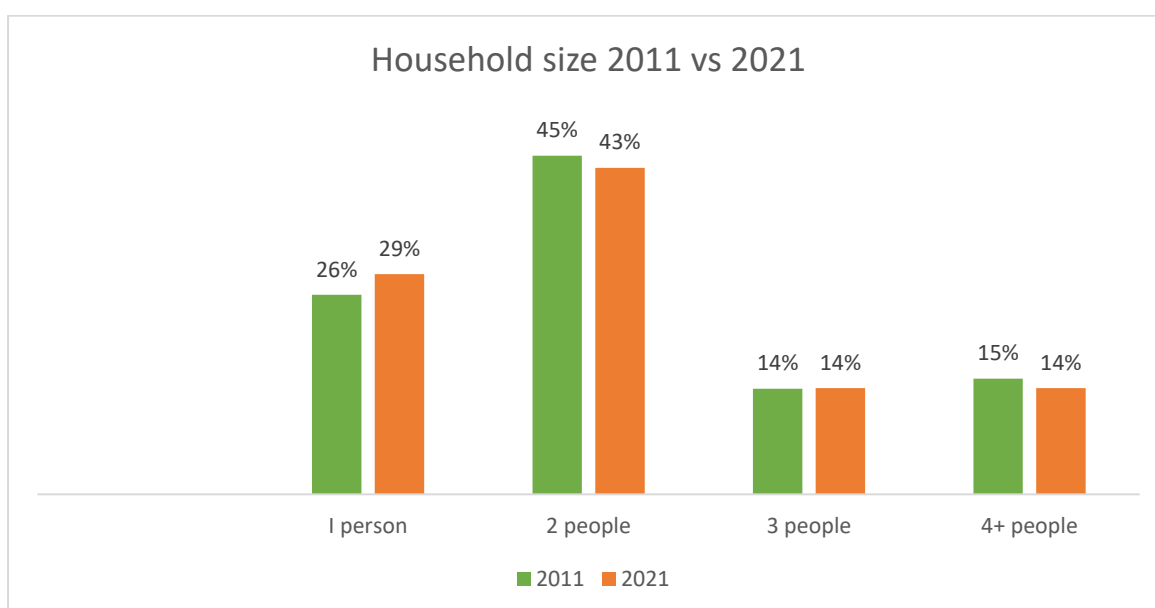


Figure 8: Sporle with Palgrave household size 2011 vs 2021 Census data



## Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment identifies that 26 new homes were built in the parish between 2011 and 2024. As of 2024, there were 77 outstanding commitments, most of which relate to the Essex Farm development.

Housing affordability is a local issue. The median house price in Sporle with Palgrave increased from £174,750 in 2015 to £305,000 in 2024. The Housing Needs Assessment concludes that local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level market homes unless they have a very large deposit.



The Housing Needs Assessment identifies a need for a balanced mix of homes, including affordable housing, mid-sized homes, and homes suitable for both younger households and older residents.

### House Prices

Land registry data shows that there were 19 residential sales in the parish in 2025. The average (mean) sold price was £255,263. The sales included: 13 detached, 5 semi-detached and one terraced property.

### District Council data and Local Plan allocations

The development boundaries for Sporle with Palgrave are shown on Figure 12. The Breckland Local Plan<sup>10</sup> identifies Sporle as a Local Service Centre and says it will see 10% growth by 2036, providing an additional 72 dwellings (including the allocation, completions and commitments). There are currently 19 housing completions and 18 commitments.

Data from Breckland District Council obtained in February 2024 shows that since 2013 there have been 44 new dwellings built within the parish. There may be more which have planning permission, but which have not yet been built.

Figure 9: Housing completions data (Source: Breckland District Council, February 2024)

| YEAR         | NEW DWELLINGS COMPLETED |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| 2013/14      | 3                       |
| 2014/15      | 6                       |
| 2015/16      | 6                       |
| 2016/17      | 3                       |
| 2017/18      | 3                       |
| 2018/19      | 11                      |
| 2019/20      | 4                       |
| 2020/21      | 6                       |
| 2021/22      | 1                       |
| 2022/23      | 1                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>44</b>               |

District Council housing data shows that in terms of affordable housing there have been no new additional affordable houses built since 2016 in the parish. Sporle with Palgrave has 91 affordable housing units, the majority of which are 3 bedrooms (42) or 2 bedrooms (36). There are 3 units that are shared ownership as shown in the table below. District Council data states that there are currently 4 people on the housing register awaiting housing in the parish and that in the last year 2023-24 there were 3 lettings made in the parish.

The steering group have identified that 12 affordable homes have been sold off over the last 5 years. It is unclear whether this is reflected in the data below provided by the planning authority. So, the affordable housing stock is shrinking – this is an issue.

<sup>10</sup> Breckland District Council [Local Plan](#) 2023

Figure 10: Affordable housing stock in Sporle with Palgrave (Source: Breckland District Council housing dashboard Feb 2024)

| Affordable housing stock by parish and bedrooms (Breckland only)                                                               |                  |                |    |    |    |   |   |   |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----|----|----|---|---|---|-------|
| Local authority housing team data, 2022                                                                                        |                  |                |    |    |    |   |   |   |       |
| Area                                                                                                                           | Dwelling type    | Number of beds |    |    |    |   |   |   | Total |
|                                                                                                                                |                  | Bedsit         | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5 | 6 |       |
| Sporle with Palgrave                                                                                                           | General needs    | 0              | 11 | 36 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 91    |
|                                                                                                                                | Sheltered        | 0              | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0     |
|                                                                                                                                | Shared ownership | 0              | 0  | 1  | 2  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3     |
| General needs = 'standard' housing associatiac Sheltered = designed for elderly Shared ownership = part rent, part buy housing |                  |                |    |    |    |   |   |   |       |

## Local Plan allocations

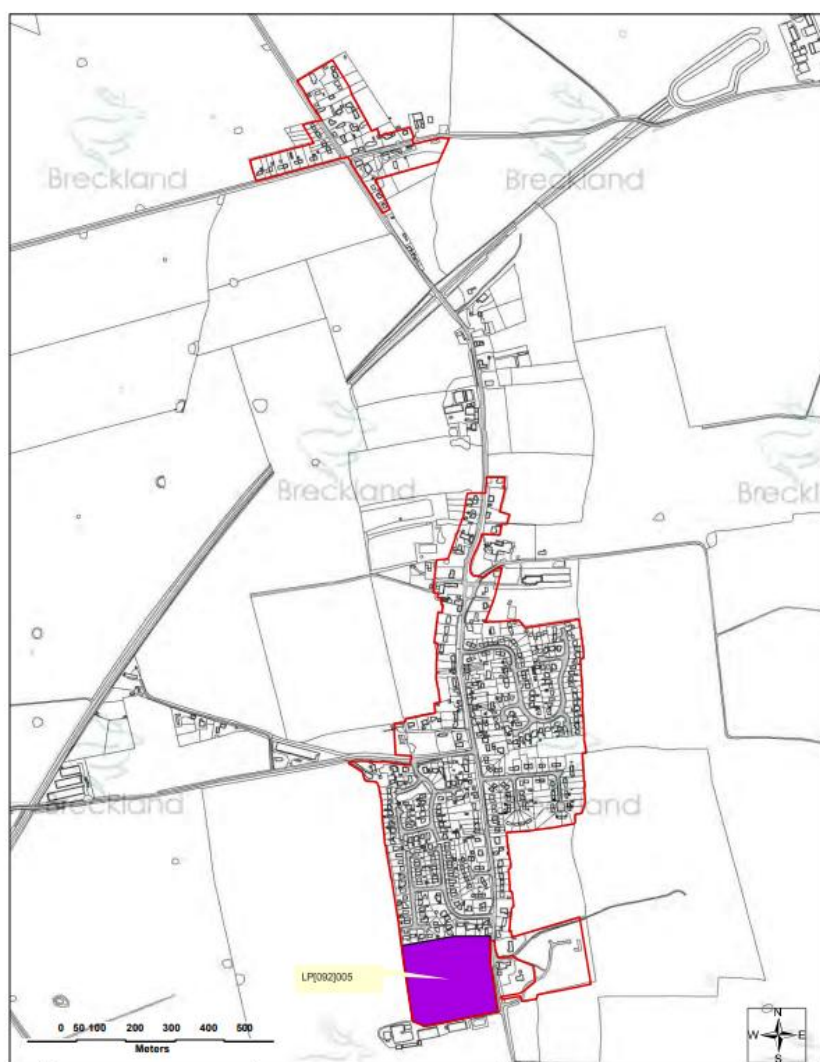
The adopted Local Plan allocated land north-east of Essex Farm for residential development. Reserved matters permission has now been granted, and the site forms the main element of the parish's current housing commitments. The site is shown in purple in Figure 12 and is allocated for residential development of at least 35 dwellings and the provision of open space. Development of the site is subject to the following criteria<sup>11</sup>:

- Principle access is provided from The Street
- New structural landscape is provided on the southern boundary of the site to minimise the impact of the new settlement edge formed by the development
- Suitable improvements to pedestrian and cycle links from the site to the village along The Street are provided
- The site specific flood risk assessment included with the planning application shall address the significant overland flow path running through the site. If the flow path cannot be avoided then it should be demonstrated how any proposed mitigation to achieve flood free development does not worsen flooding elsewhere. Appropriate sustainable surface water attenuation measures should be included as part of the landscaping scheme
- The scheme's design will preserve or where possible enhance the setting of nearby designated and non-designated heritage assets. An archaeological assessment will be required to support the application
- Development proposals should have regard to the findings of the Water Cycle Study which indicates potential issues with the wastewater network capacity. Applications will need to demonstrate appropriate solutions have been identified.

<sup>11</sup> Breckland District Council [Local Plan](#) 2023

Figure 11: Development boundaries and site allocation for Sporle with Palgrave (Source: Breckland District Council Local Plan)

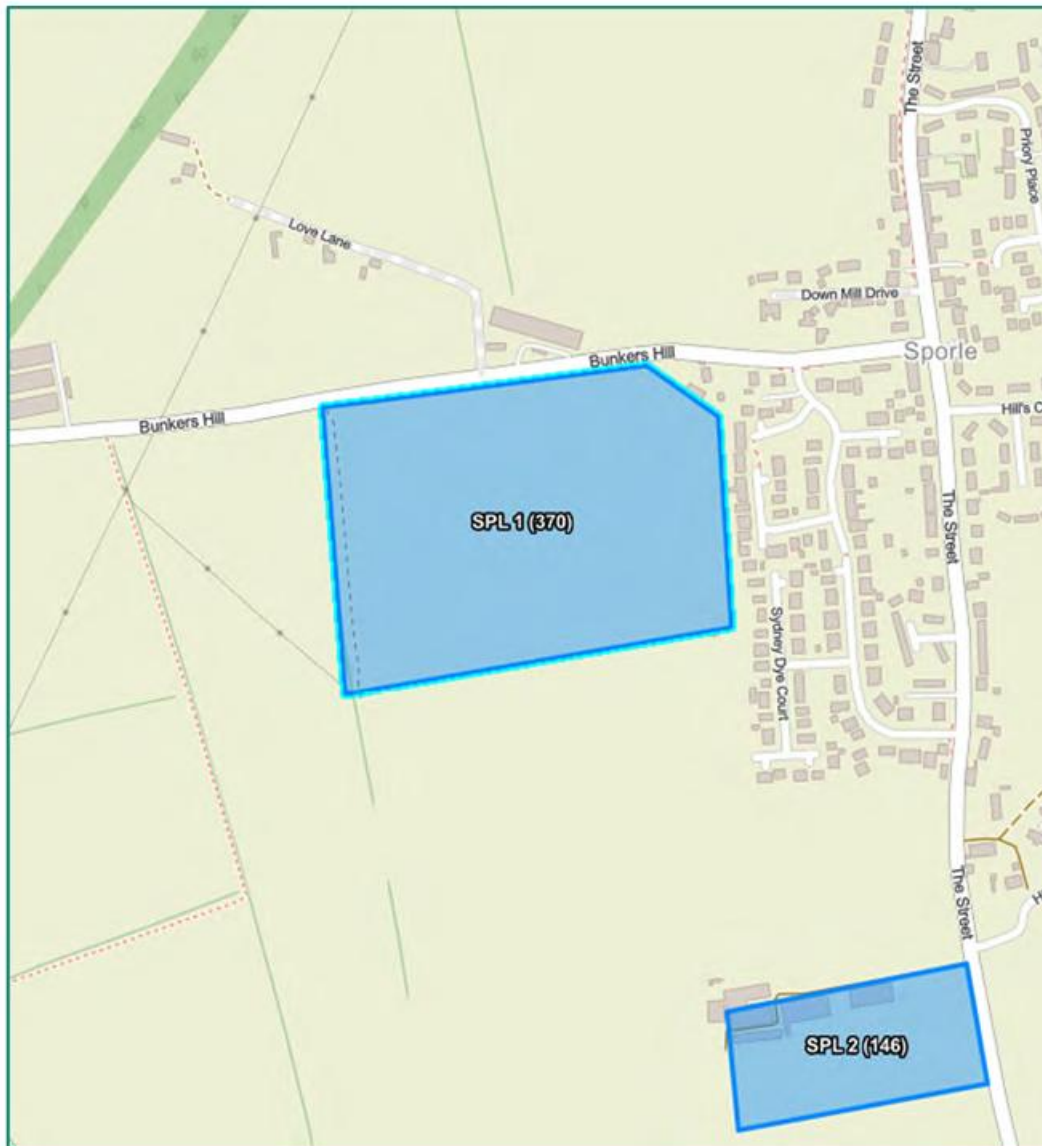
Map 3.17 Summary of the Sporle Allocation.



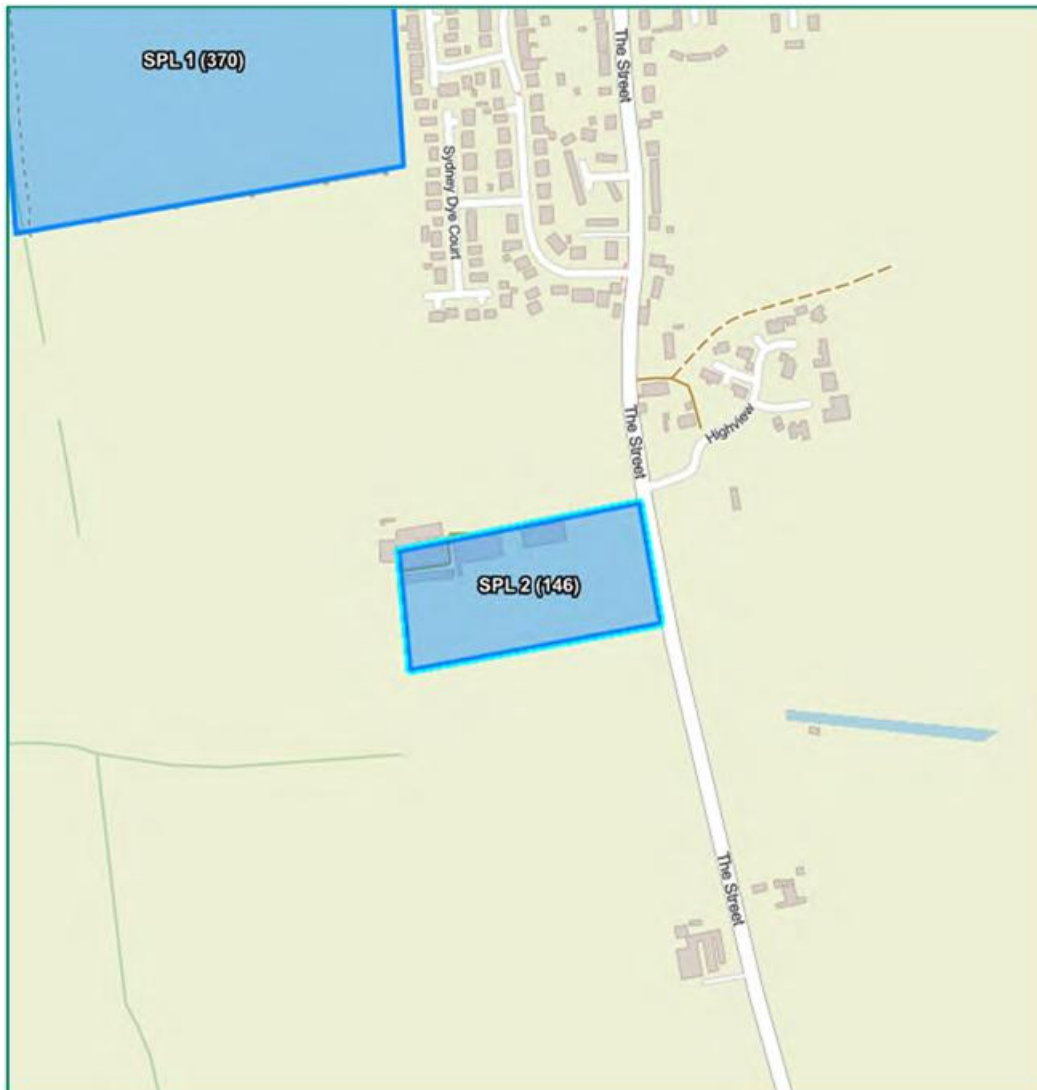
COPYRIGHT This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Breckland District Council licence no.100019535. Published 2017.

In the emerging Local Plan (2024-2042) which underwent the Regulation 18 consultation (preferred options) in October 2025, Policy GEN 02 designates Sporle as a Secondary Parish and sets out that approximately 5% of new housing development is directed to Secondary Parishes in Breckland over the Plan period. Policy HOU 02 states there are 77 commitments in Sporle, and new allocations will be made up of 60 dwellings in total contributing a total of 137 dwellings by the end of 2042. Two allocations are proposed for Sporle: SL1- Bunkers Hill (Left) and SPL2 – Land off the Street for approximately 30 dwellings each. These allocations may be subject to change.

## PROPOSAL SPL 1 (370): Bunkers Hill (Left)



## PROPOSAL SPL 2 (146): West of The Street



### Summary:

- Sporle with Palgrave has a higher proportion of home ownership and a lower proportion of private renters when compared to the rest of Norfolk.
- There are a mix of household sizes in the parish, and the majority are made up of one or two people.
- The average (mean) sold house price in 2025 was £255,263.
- The Breckland Local Plan allocates land northeast of Essex Farm for residential development of at least 35 dwellings.
- The emerging Breckland Local Plan has proposed two new allocations totalling 60 dwellings in their preferred options consultation.
- The Local Plan requires provision of open space as part of the development as well as other criteria that must be met.
- Since 2013 a total of 44 new dwellings have been built in the parish.

### **Issues:**

- **Future housing should provide a mix of types, sizes and tenures that responds to local needs.**
- **New development should help provide opportunities for younger households and families, while also supporting older residents who wish to remain in the parish.**

### **Availability of local services, employment, and accessibility**

Sporle is identified in the Breckland Local Plan<sup>12</sup> as a Local Service Centre village, it meets the criteria for this by having the following services:

- Sporle Church of England Primary School
- Shop and Post Office
- Village Hall/Community Centre
- Frequent bus service
- The IDBR<sup>13</sup> (2016) shows that there are 22 businesses registered within the parish

There are no medical/dental facilities in the village; the nearest dentist and GP services are located in Swaffham. The nearest large hospital with Accident and Emergency services is the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn. The nearest library is in Swaffham and Norfolk County Council runs a mobile library service which covers Sporle with Palgrave and visits once a month on a Monday making 4 stops in the village (see below)

Sporle Church of England Primary Academy is an important local facility. Education capacity should be kept under review as committed housing growth is delivered.

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<sup>12</sup> Breckland District Council [Local Plan](#) 2023

<sup>13</sup> Inter-Departmental Business Register - a comprehensive list of UK businesses used by government for statistical purposes

Figure 12: Mobile Library stops in Sporle - Norfolk County Council

**Route Number:** EDE 105

**Day:** Monday

**Week:** 2

| Village   | Stop Name        | Arrival Time | Departure Time | Postcode |
|-----------|------------------|--------------|----------------|----------|
| SCARNING  | MAYFAIR          | 12:35        | 12:50          | NR19 2LN |
| SPORLE    | COMMUNITY HALL   | 13:55        | 14:35          | PE32 2DR |
| SPORLE    | SYDNEY DYE COURT | 14:40        | 14:55          | PE32 2EE |
| SPORLE    | NEWFIELDS        | 15:00        | 15:20          | PE32 2UA |
| SPORLE    | PRIORY CLOSE     | 15:25        | 16:00          | PE32 2DU |
| GT DUNHAM | VILLAGE HALL     | 16:40        | 17:05          | PE32 2LN |

Sporle with Palgrave has a community centre, and many community groups/clubs are active in the village including the following listed by the Parish Council: bridge club, carpet bowls club, gardening group, Monday café, parish magazine, photography club, scrabble club, Sporle Singers, history group and stitch and sew group<sup>14</sup>.

There is a regular bus service from Sporle that runs to Swaffham and to Watton/Dereham that runs Monday to Saturday connecting the village to services and employment opportunities that are not available in Sporle itself. The nearest mainline train station is in King's Lynn where trains to Cambridge and London King's Cross can be accessed.

### **Summary:**

- **There are some local services in the parish: a shop, Post Office, primary school, churches and a community centre.**
- **Residents need to travel to nearby towns to access some services such as GP, dentist, hospitals, secondary education, banks and rail services.**

### **Issues:**

- **Additional housing could support the ongoing viability of existing local services or the creation of new ones.**

## **Transport and Connectivity**

Sporle with Palgrave is 3 miles north-east of Swaffham, a 10-minute journey by car or bus. Dereham is 11 miles east along the A47 (20 minutes by car or around an hour by bus). Downham Market is approximately 19 miles south-west (30 minutes

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<sup>14</sup> Sporle with Palgrave Parish Council - [community](#). Accessed 13/02/2024

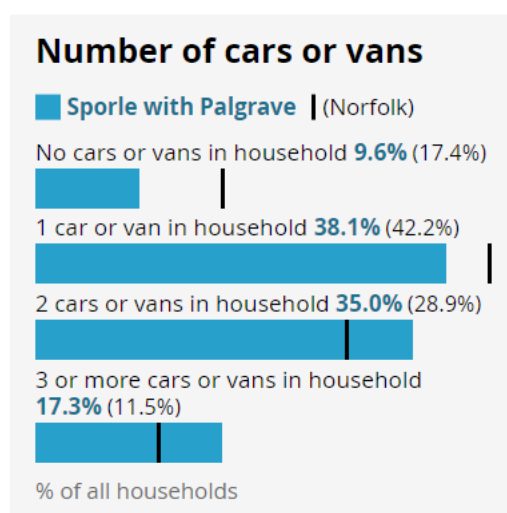


by car) whilst the large town of King's Lynn is the same distance to the north-west of Sporle.

Bus services run in both directions from stops by Threeways Stores. Services to Swaffham run hourly on weekdays so could support travel to work or education as well as for leisure, shopping and to access services, although Saturday services are less frequent. Buses to/from Dereham take around an hour and are less frequent. There are no Sunday bus services or evening bus services to provide transport for evening/shift workers or for people of all ages to access evening activities. There are no bus links that take people north/south, only east/west along the A47.

Vehicle ownership in the parish is higher than the Norfolk average with 90% of households owning at least one car/van (Norfolk average is 82%)<sup>15</sup>. As the figure below shows, around 38% of households in the parish own one vehicle and around 35% own two.

Figure 13: Numbers of cars or vans in Sporle with Palgrave vs. Norfolk (Census 2021)

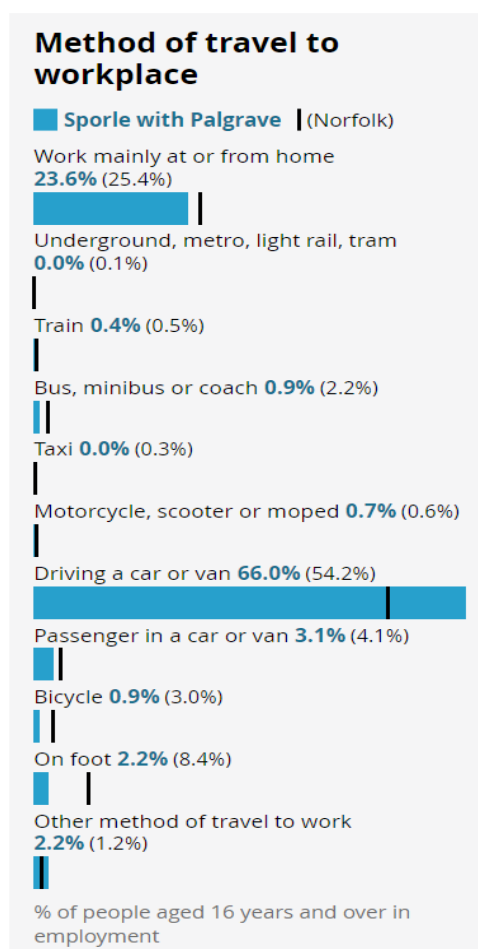


The 2021 census shows that most people who live in the parish and travel to work use a car or van to do so (66%). Just over 1% of people who live in parish and travel to work use public transport. Around 24% of people in the parish who work do so from home.

The 2021 Census travel-to-work data should be interpreted with some caution because it was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel patterns and workplace attendance were significantly disrupted. However, home and hybrid working have continued beyond the pandemic and remain part of the national working pattern. ONS evidence from January to March 2025 found that 28% of working adults in Great Britain were hybrid workers, combining working from home with travelling to work.

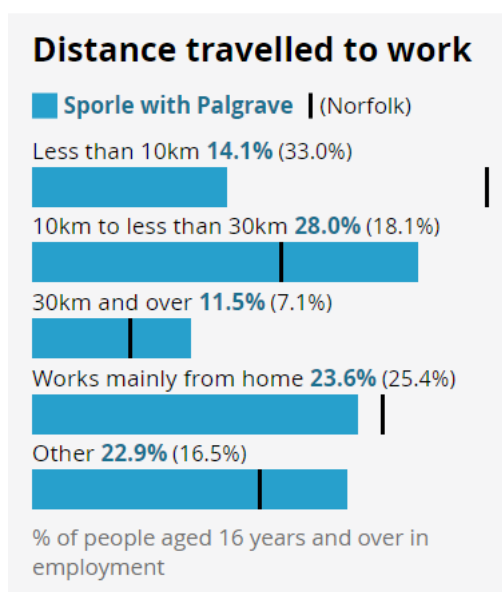
<sup>15</sup> Census 2021, vehicle ownership. Source: [Build a custom area profile – Census 2021, ONS](#)

Figure 14: Method of travel to work - Sporle with Palgrave residents vs. Norfolk (Census 2021)



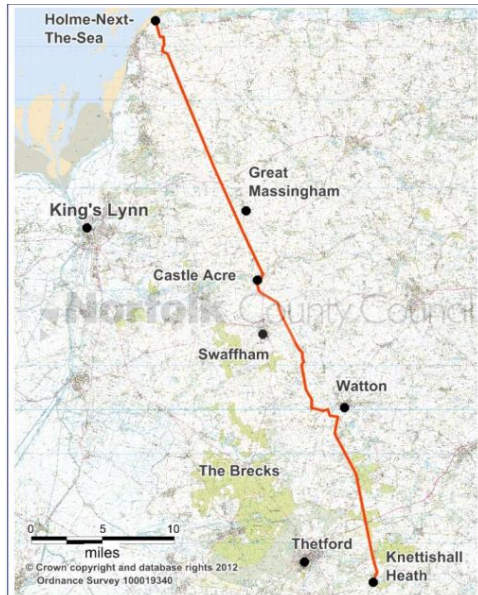
Those who travel to work are most likely to travel between 10-30km (6-18miles) to work, perhaps suggesting travel to Dereham / King's Lynn. Just under 23% of people travel more than 30km (18miles) for work.

Figure 15: Distance travelled to work - Sporle and Palgrave residents vs. Norfolk (Census 2021)



In terms of walking and cycling infrastructure there are some public rights of way offering access into the countryside. One of these is the Peddars Way which runs through the parish. Peddars Way is a 46-mile-long distance footpath which runs from Knettishall Heath in Suffolk all the way to Holme-next-the-Sea on the North Norfolk coast<sup>16</sup>. Most of Peddars Way is off-road and it is open to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. The route is shown on the map below:

*Figure 16: Peddars Way long distance trail - Norfolk County Council*

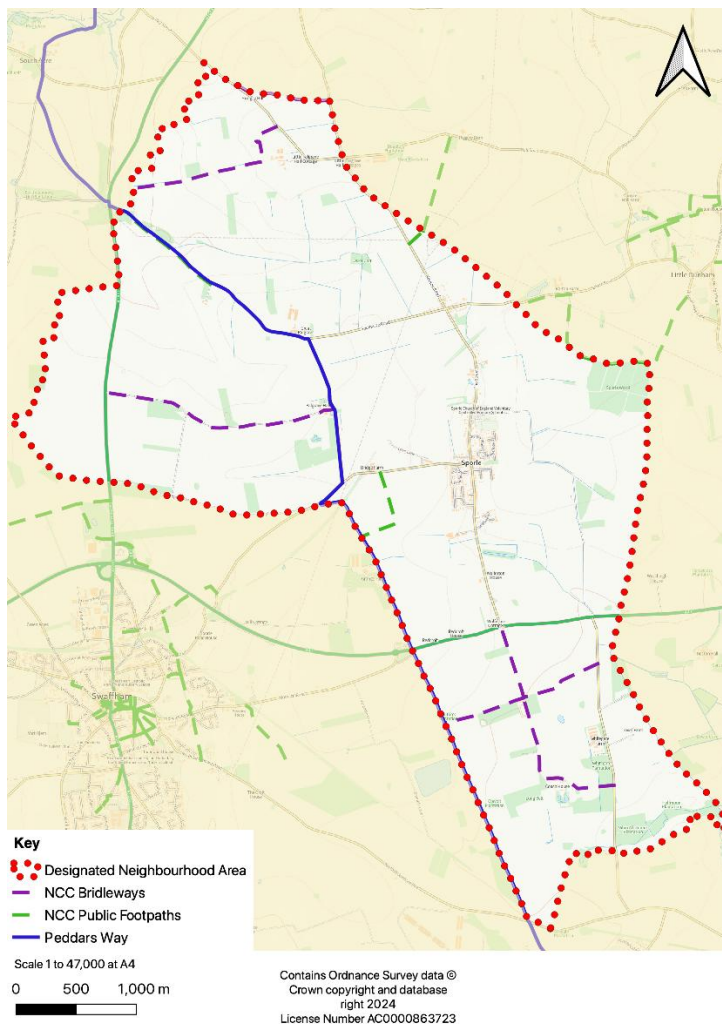


All of the Public Rights of Way – both footpaths and bridleways - in the parish are shown on the map below:

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<sup>16</sup> Norfolk County Council Norfolk Trails – [Peddars Way](#)

Figure 17: Public Rights of Way in Sporle with Palgrave – source Norfolk County Council 2024



### **Summary:**

- Most households have access to a private car/van, with the proportion of people not having one very low.
- Public transport provides some weekday and Saturday connections to nearby towns, including Swaffham and Dereham, but services are limited, with no evening provision and reduced options outside weekday daytime periods.
- Most people who travel to work from the parish do so using a private car which likely reflects the limited availability of public transport options in the village as well as the distance travelled to work by residents.
- There is access into the countryside for recreational purposes including footpaths/bridleways and the national trail the Peddars Way runs through the parish offering long distance off-road access to the countryside.

### **Issues:**

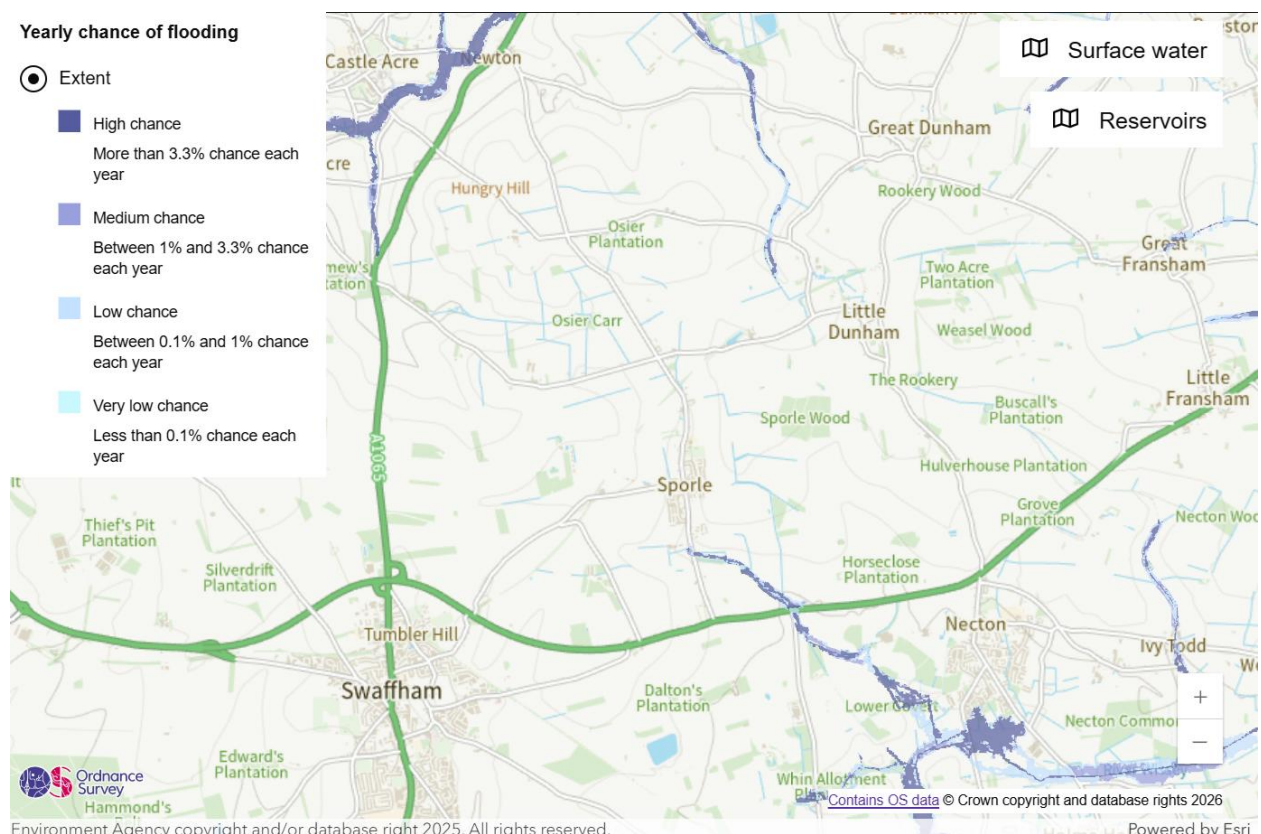
- Public transport is not available during evenings and weekends, limiting access to nearby towns for shift workers and for leisure purposes.

- On street parking is an issue.

## Flood Risk

The Environment Agency provides summary flood risk information for local areas alongside detailed maps showing flood risk from rivers and the sea, surface water, reservoirs and groundwater. There is little risk of fluvial flooding in Sporle with Palgrave. Environment Agency mapping shows only two small areas falling within higher fluvial flood risk zones, both of which are outside the built-up parts of the villages.

Figure 18: Flood risk from rivers and sea in Sporle with Palgrave (Source: Environment Agency, 2025)



Surface water flooding is the main flood risk issue in the parish. Environment Agency surface water flood risk mapping<sup>17</sup> shows areas of medium and high surface water flood risk within parts of the parish, including along some stretches of The Street within the built-up part of Sporle<sup>18</sup>. The mapping indicates that this risk mainly affects the road and properties close to the watercourse that flows south through the centre of the village.

<sup>17</sup> Environment Agency – [learn more about flood risk](#)

<sup>18</sup> Environment Agency [Long term flood risk – surface water flooding](#)



Figure 19: Surface water flood risk in Sporle with Palgrave (Source: Environment Agency, 2025)

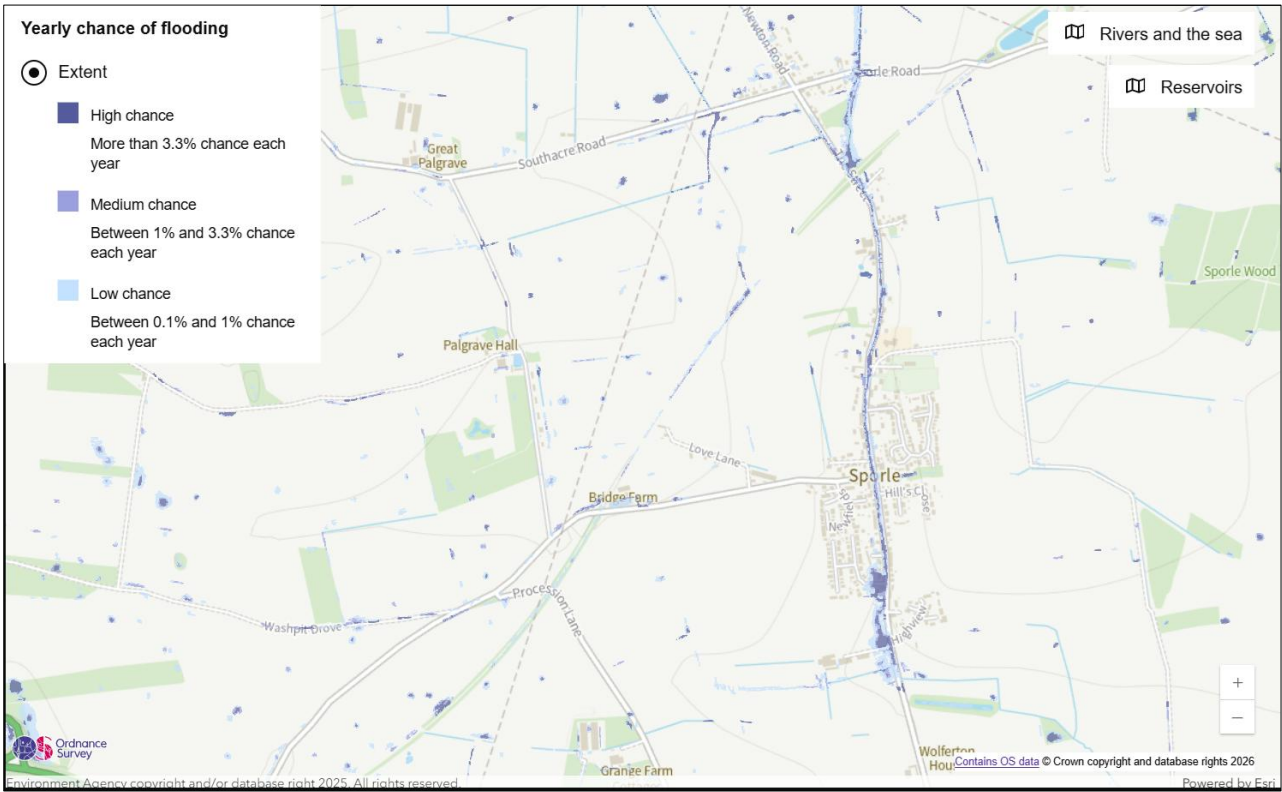
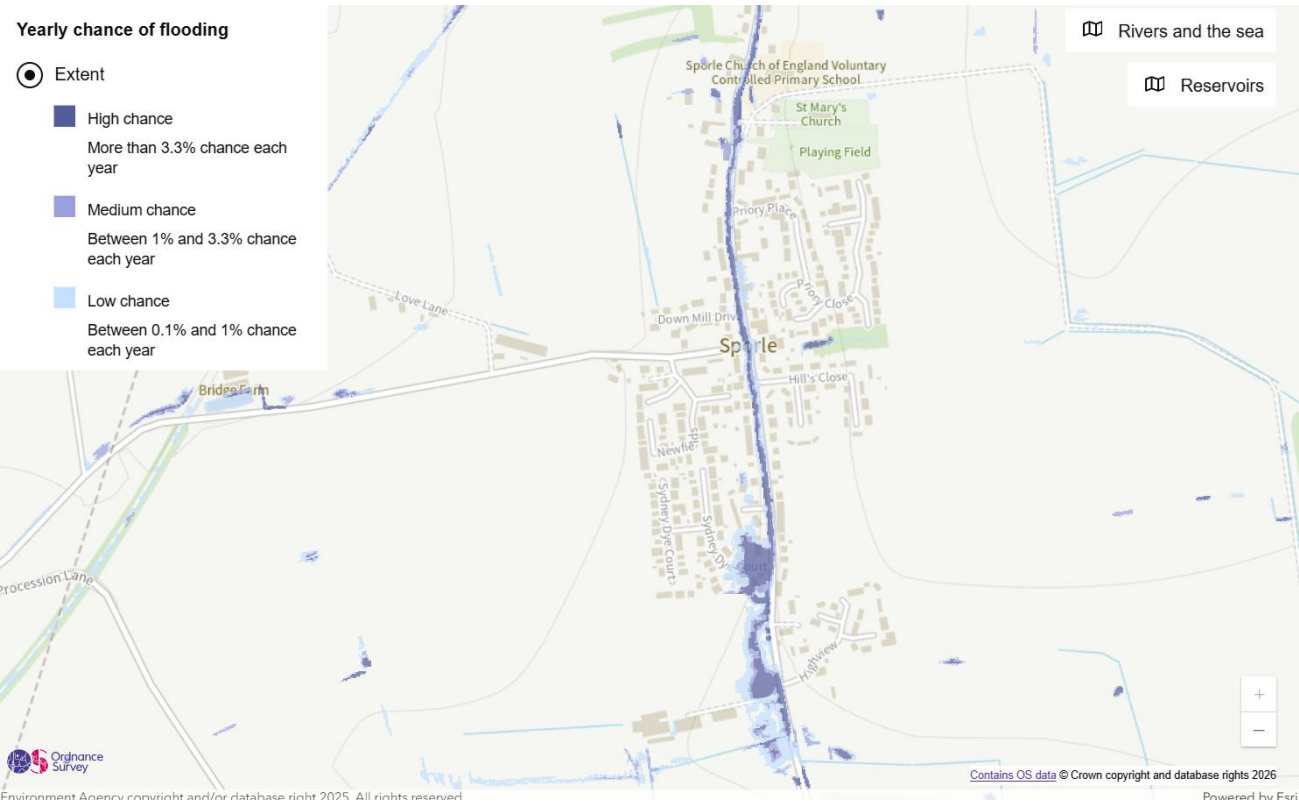


Figure 20: Surface water flood risk in Sporle village (Source: Environment Agency, 2025)



The village's shallow valley setting, the presence of the stream through the built-up area, and the pattern of development along The Street mean that flood risk and surface water management are important planning considerations. Heavy rainfall can overwhelm drainage systems and increase run-off, particularly where hard surfaces prevent water from soaking naturally into the ground.

The Breckland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024<sup>19</sup>) does not identify any specific flood risk issue for Sporle with Palgrave. Norfolk County Council Lead Local Flood Authority records also show no flood investigation reports for the parish<sup>20</sup>. However, this does not mean that local surface water issues are absent, and community consultation identified drainage and flooding as local concerns.

The Environment Agency describes groundwater flooding as when water under the ground (the water table) rises to the surface. Underground rooms, such as cellars and basements, are particularly at risk. Groundwater flooding is more likely where there is chalk under the ground (the bedrock). It can also happen in places with sand and gravel, such as river valleys. Groundwater levels are not monitored in all parts of England and so levels are difficult to predict. Norfolk County Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2015) states that "The extent of groundwater flood risk is not currently understood." and that an effective means of investigating groundwater flooding risk across Norfolk is needed<sup>21</sup>. The Environment Agency describes the signs of groundwater flooding including: water coming up through the ground or floor rather than through doors, usually slower than river flooding, flooding usually happens days weeks or even months after heavy rain, flooding may last a long time - weeks or months, and the water doesn't always appear where you would expect it to<sup>22</sup>.

Sustainable drainage systems can help manage flood risk by reducing and slowing surface water run-off. They can also provide wider benefits for water quality, biodiversity, amenity and climate change adaptation. Development should therefore use sustainable drainage and water-sensitive design wherever appropriate, including measures such as permeable surfaces, rain gardens, swales, attenuation features, tree planting, rainwater harvesting, and the retention and maintenance of existing ditches and watercourses.

### **Summary:**

- **There is little risk of fluvial flooding in the parish.**
- **Surface water flooding is the main flood risk issue, particularly along parts of The Street and close to the watercourse running through the village.**
- **The Breckland Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 does not identify specific flood risk issues for Sporle with Palgrave, and there are no LLFA flood investigation reports for the parish.**
- **Community consultation identified drainage and flooding as local concerns.**

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<sup>19</sup>Breckland District Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. 2024. Source: [Breckland District Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#)

<sup>20</sup> Norfolk County Council [Flood Investigation Reports](#)

<sup>21</sup> Norfolk County Council - [Norfolk Local Flood Risk Strategy \(2015\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> UK government [groundwater flooding guidance](#)



- **There is no consistent local information available on groundwater flood risk, so groundwater should be considered where site conditions indicate it may be relevant.**

**Issues:**

- **Development should be located and designed so that it does not increase flood risk on-site or elsewhere.**
- **Development should use sustainable drainage and water-sensitive design to manage surface water run-off, improve water quality, support biodiversity, and help adapt to climate change.**
- **Existing ditches, watercourses and natural drainage features should be retained and maintained where possible.**
- **Particular care is needed in areas already shown to be at medium or high risk of surface water flooding.**

## **Natural environment**

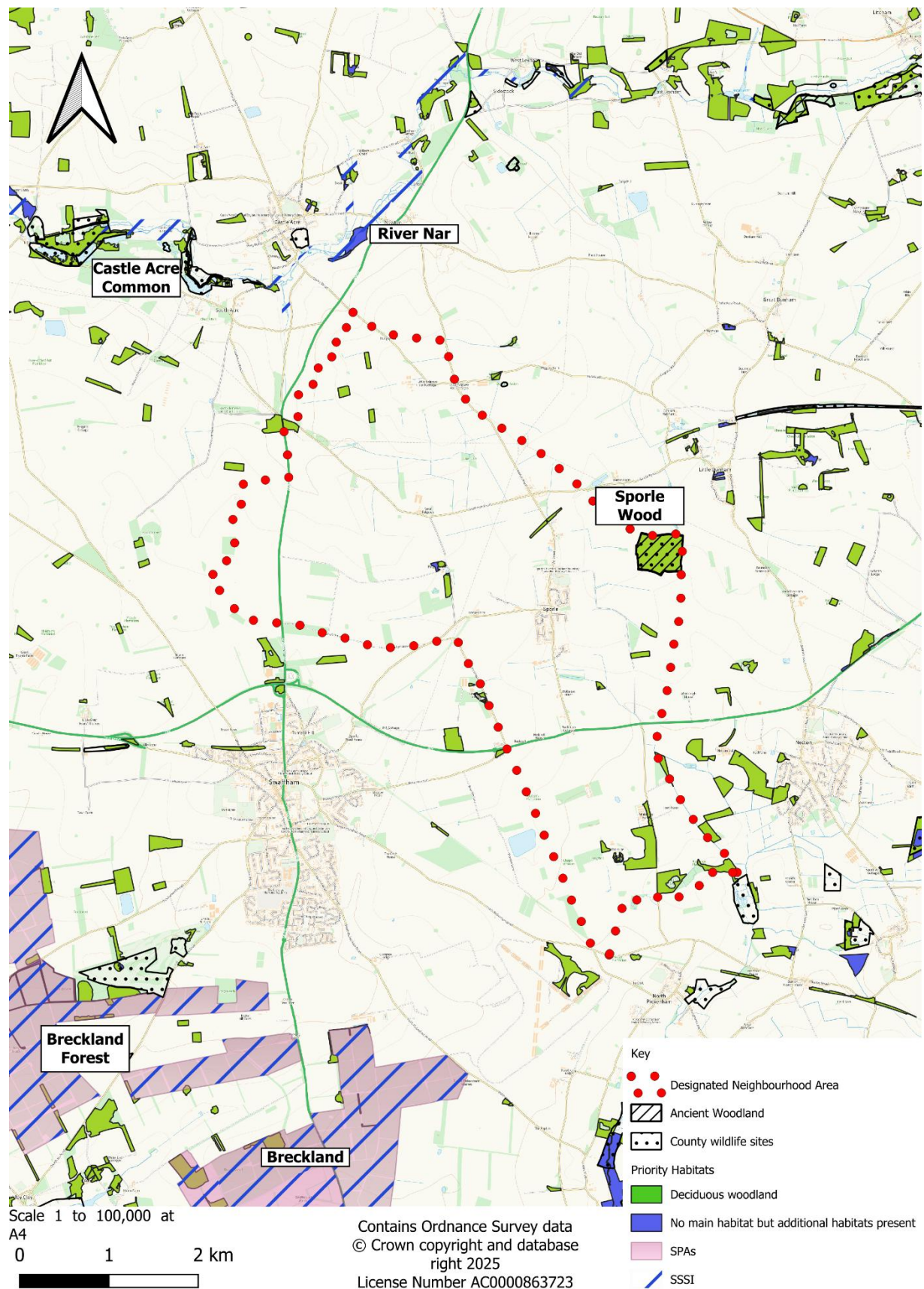
The natural environment of Sporle with Palgrave is shaped by its rural setting, arable farmland, hedgerows, woodland, trees, green spaces, ditches and the stream running through the village. These features contribute to local landscape character, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, flood management and the rural quality of the parish.

There are no statutory ecological designations within the neighbourhood area. However, there are important designated sites close to the parish, including Castle Acre Common SSSI and the River Nar SSSI to the north, and Breckland SPA and Breckland Forest SSSI to the south-west. These nearby sites provide important ecological context for the Neighbourhood Plan area.

The parish contains non-statutory ecological assets, including Sporle Wood, which is a County Wildlife Site and ancient woodland. The parish also contains priority habitat, principally deciduous woodland, and areas that form part of wider woodland habitat networks.

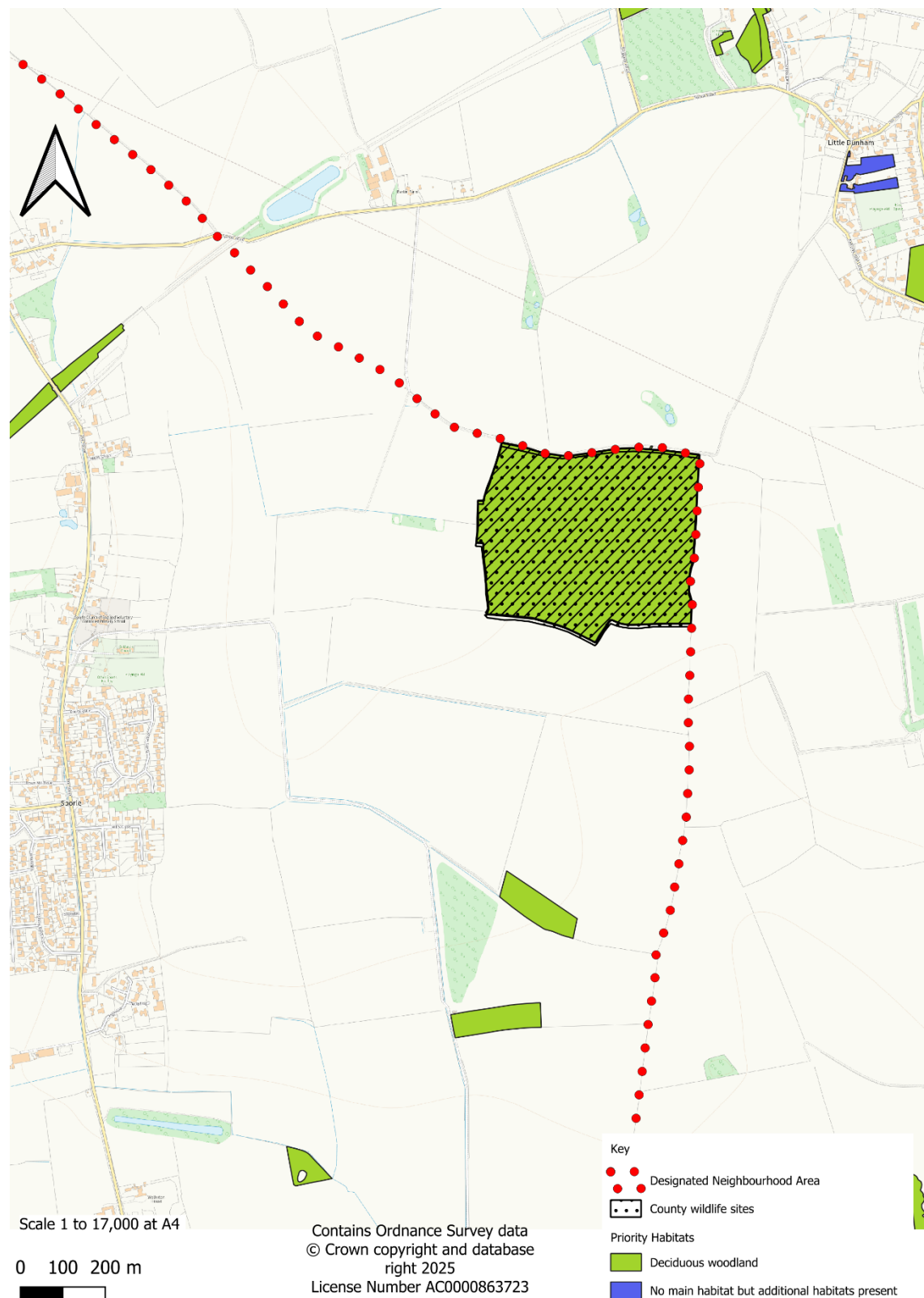
The map below shows that areas close to the plan area that have statutory designations – to the north of the plan area is Castle Acre Common SSSI and the River Nar SSSI whilst to the southwest of the plan area is Breckland SPA and Breckland Forest SSSI.

Figure 21: Statutory and non-statutory designated sites (Source Natural England, 2025)



There is a non-statutory County Wildlife Site within the plan area which is shown on the map below. This is Sporle Wood, an ancient woodland and wildlife site.

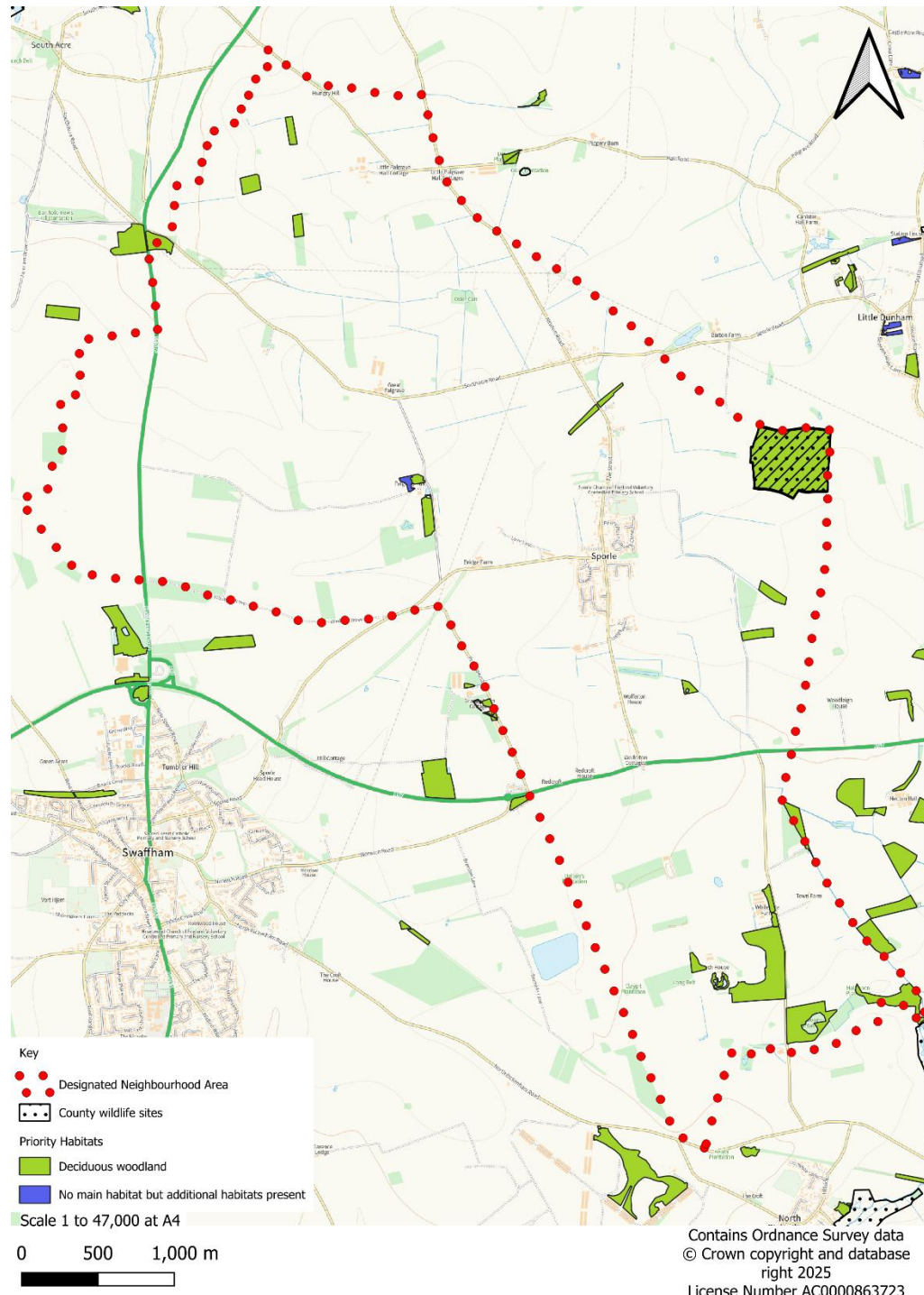
Figure 22: County Wildlife Sites (Source Natural England, 2025)





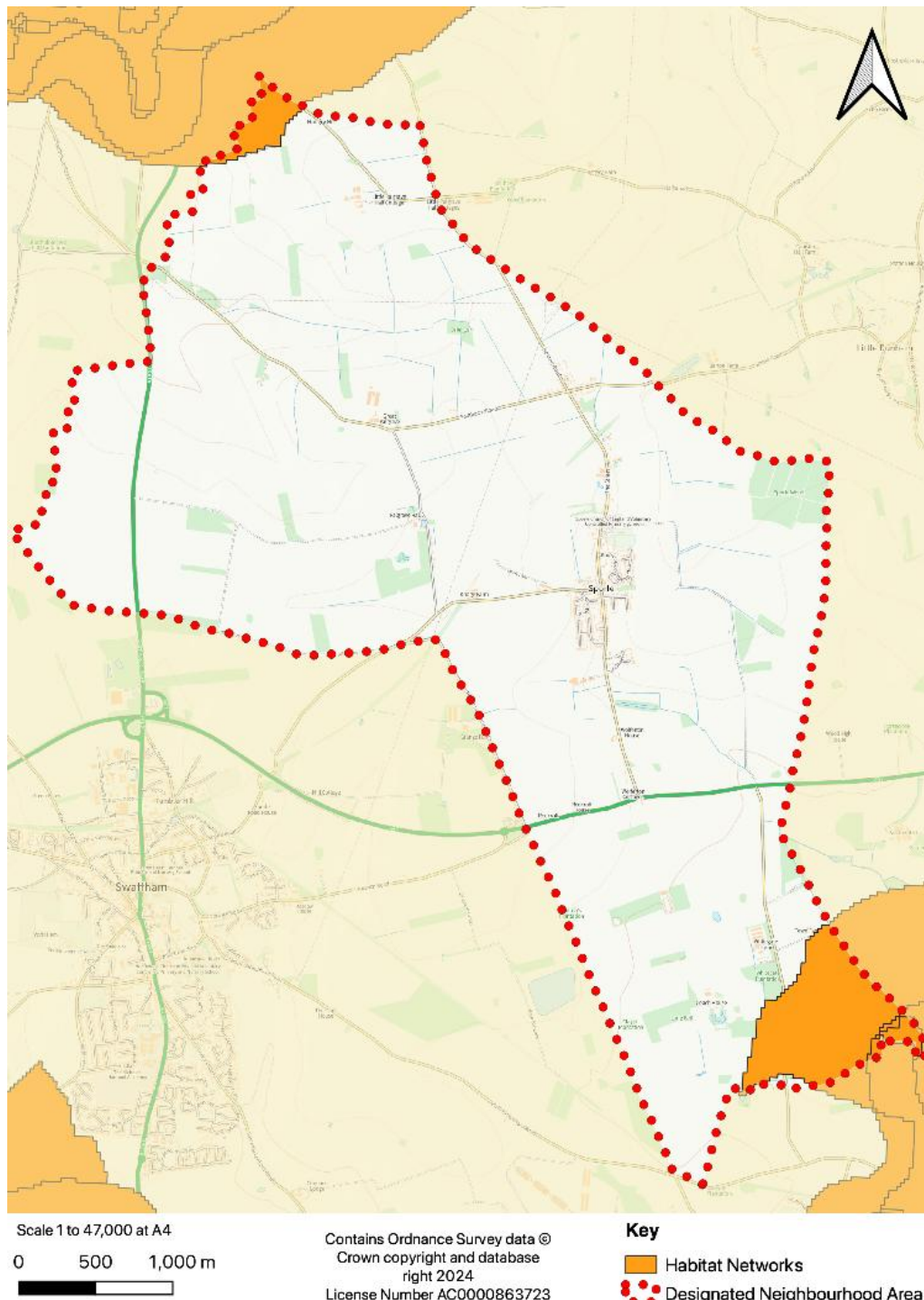
Priority habitats or habitats of principle importance for biodiversity conservation are habitats which Natural England deems most threatened, in greatest decline, or where the UK holds a significant proportion of the world's total population. There is just one type of priority habitat in the parish: deciduous woodland. Although priority habitats and local wildlife sites are not protected in the same way as national statutory designations, they are important local environmental assets. Development should avoid harm to these areas and, where relevant, should be designed to protect, buffer and strengthen them.

Figure 23: Priority habitats in Sporle with Palgrave (Source Natural England, 2025)



As shown in the map below, parts of the parish contain habitat network areas for woodland. Habitat networks are important because they help wildlife move through the landscape and reduce the isolation of individual habitats. In Sporle with Palgrave, woodland, hedgerows, trees, green spaces, field margins, ditches and the stream corridor all have potential to contribute to habitat connectivity. Development should avoid fragmenting these networks and should take opportunities to strengthen them through planting, habitat creation, biodiversity net gain and the retention of existing natural features.

*Figure 24: Habitat networks in Sporle and Palgrave (Source: Natural England, 2024)*





Community consultation shows strong local support for protecting and improving the natural environment. In the initial consultation, 97% of respondents agreed that it is important to protect existing habitats, including trees and hedgerows. Suggestions for improving the natural environment included better management of green spaces, tree planting, wildlife-friendly features in new development, and improved drainage.

### Local Nature Recovery

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are statutory strategies introduced through the Environment Act 2021. They identify priorities and opportunities for nature recovery across a defined strategy area and are intended to guide action by local authorities, landowners, developers, environmental organisations and communities.

The Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy includes a Local Habitat Map. This identifies Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) and Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity (ACB). These mapped areas are not the same as planning designations and do not prevent development, but they provide evidence on where existing biodiversity value and future nature recovery opportunities are concentrated.

Within Sporle with Palgrave, the LNRS mapping identifies an Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity immediately east/north-east of Sporle, associated with the woodland area close to Sporle Wood. Sporle Wood is also identified in other evidence as a County Wildlife Site and ancient woodland.

The LNRS mapping also identifies a wider network of Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity around the village and surrounding countryside. These include larger woodland blocks, smaller woodland areas and linear habitat features. The mapped areas are particularly evident to the east and north of Sporle, with additional areas around the wider parish and towards neighbouring settlements.

The mapping indicates that the most relevant local nature recovery opportunities for Sporle with Palgrave are likely to relate to protecting and strengthening existing woodland, hedgerows, field margins, ditches, green spaces and other linear habitat features. These features are important because they help connect habitats across a predominantly agricultural landscape.

The built-up part of Sporle is not generally identified as an Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity or an Area that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity. However, several mapped areas lie close to the settlement edge. This means that development on or near the edge of the village should be informed by the existing ecological network and should avoid weakening habitat connections where possible.

Figure 25: Norfolk Local Nature Recovery Strategy mapping for Sporle with Palgrave



### **Summary:**

- There are no statutory ecological designations within the neighbourhood area.
- There are important designated sites close to the parish, including Castle Acre Common SSSI, River Nar SSSI, Breckland SPA and Breckland Forest SSSI.
- Sporle Wood is a County Wildlife Site and ancient woodland within the parish.
- The parish contains priority habitat, principally deciduous woodland.
- Woodland, hedgerows, trees, green spaces, ditches, field margins and the stream corridor contribute to local habitat connectivity.
- The Norfolk LNRS Local Habitat Map identifies one Area of Particular Importance for Biodiversity immediately east/north-east of Sporle, associated with woodland close to Sporle Wood.
- The LNRS also identifies a wider network of Areas that Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity around the village and surrounding countryside.
- The most relevant local nature recovery opportunities are likely to relate to woodland, hedgerows, field margins, ditches, green spaces and linear habitat connections.
- The built-up village is not generally mapped as an LNRS biodiversity opportunity area, but several mapped areas lie close to the settlement edge.

### **Issues:**

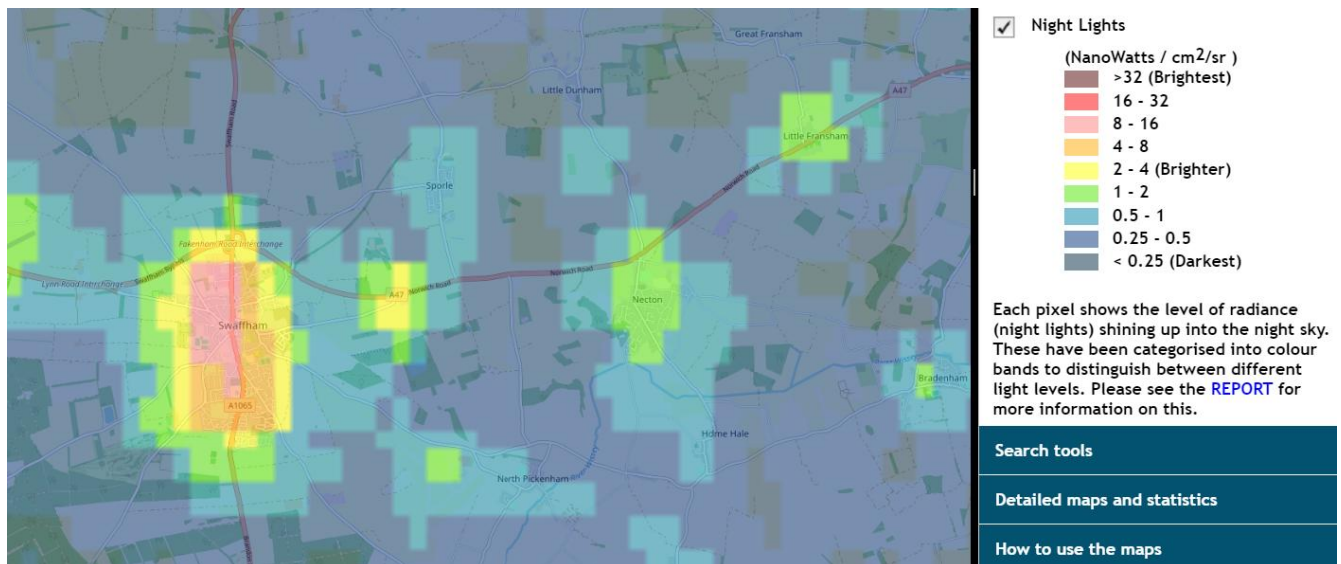
- Development should avoid harm to County Wildlife Sites, ancient woodland, priority habitats and existing habitat networks.
- Development should retain and strengthen existing trees, hedgerows, ditches, watercourses and green infrastructure wherever possible.

- **Biodiversity net gain should respond to local opportunities and help improve habitat connectivity.**
- **New development should be designed to avoid fragmenting habitats and should take opportunities to support nature recovery.**
- **The Neighbourhood Plan should take account of the Norfolk LNRS by recognising the mapped biodiversity network around Sporle and supporting policies that protect and strengthen existing habitats and connections.**
- **Particular care is needed where development is close to mapped LNRS areas, ancient woodland, County Wildlife Sites, priority habitat or existing linear habitat features.**

## Dark skies

The CPRE Dark Skies Mapping<sup>23</sup> shows that most of the parish falls into the darker categories (2 NanoWatts/cm<sup>2</sup>/sr and lower) suggesting there are low levels of light pollution in most of the neighbourhood area. The brightest areas are around the A47 junction around the A47/McDonald's roundabouts due to road lighting and lights at the services. Development which can help limit light pollution and preserve the dark skies in the parish would be beneficial.

Figure 26: Dark Skies in Sporle and surrounding area - CPRE Mapping



## Summary:

- Most of the neighbourhood plan area benefits from dark skies at night.
- A small part of the parish in the south-western corner of the neighbourhood plan area close to the A47 has brighter skies.

## Issues:

- Preserving the existing low levels of light pollution could be important in the design of any future development.
- Future development which can help to limit light pollution rather than add to the issue in the parts of the parish close to the A47 would be beneficial.

<sup>23</sup> [England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies \(cpre.org.uk\)](https://cpre.org.uk/England's-Light-Pollution-and-Dark-Skies)

## Landscape

The parish falls within the National Character Area 84 Mid Norfolk, defined by Natural England<sup>24</sup>. The Mid Norfolk NCA is a flat rural landscape characterised as:

- Ancient countryside with a long-settled agricultural character
- Arable land is enclosed by winding lanes and hedgerows
- Interspersed with woodland and heath
- Dissected by river valleys
- A patchwork of cultivated land
- Numerous church spires, distant wooded horizons and big skies dominate the landscape

Natural England describe Mid Norfolk NCA as “a tranquil place, with isolated market towns, and scattered villages and farmhouses, their red brick and flint walls and pantile roofs an intrinsic component of Norfolk character”<sup>25</sup>.

Natural England emphasises the environmental objective for Mid Norfolk of encouraging a sympathetic approach to development that maintains traditional Norfolk character and gives examples including:

- Ensuring that development plans are sensitive to conserving the historic character of the landscape and promote the use of traditional vernacular and building materials
- Minimising the effects of new development by avoiding areas with high tranquillity, incorporating green infrastructure and woodland buffers, and minimising new sources of light pollution.

Breckland District Council’s Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2022)<sup>26</sup> identifies that Sporle with Palgrave falls within two distinct landscape character types: plateau farmland<sup>27</sup> and settled tributary farmland<sup>28</sup>. It identifies Sporle with Palgrave as having the origin settlement type of ‘agricultural village’ of the ‘continuous rural row’ morphological type. These definitions are explored more below along with development implications<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Natural England [National Character Areas](#) Accessed 15/02/2024

<sup>25</sup> Natural England [NCA profile 84 Mid Norfolk](#)

<sup>26</sup> Breckland District Council [Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment](#) (2022)

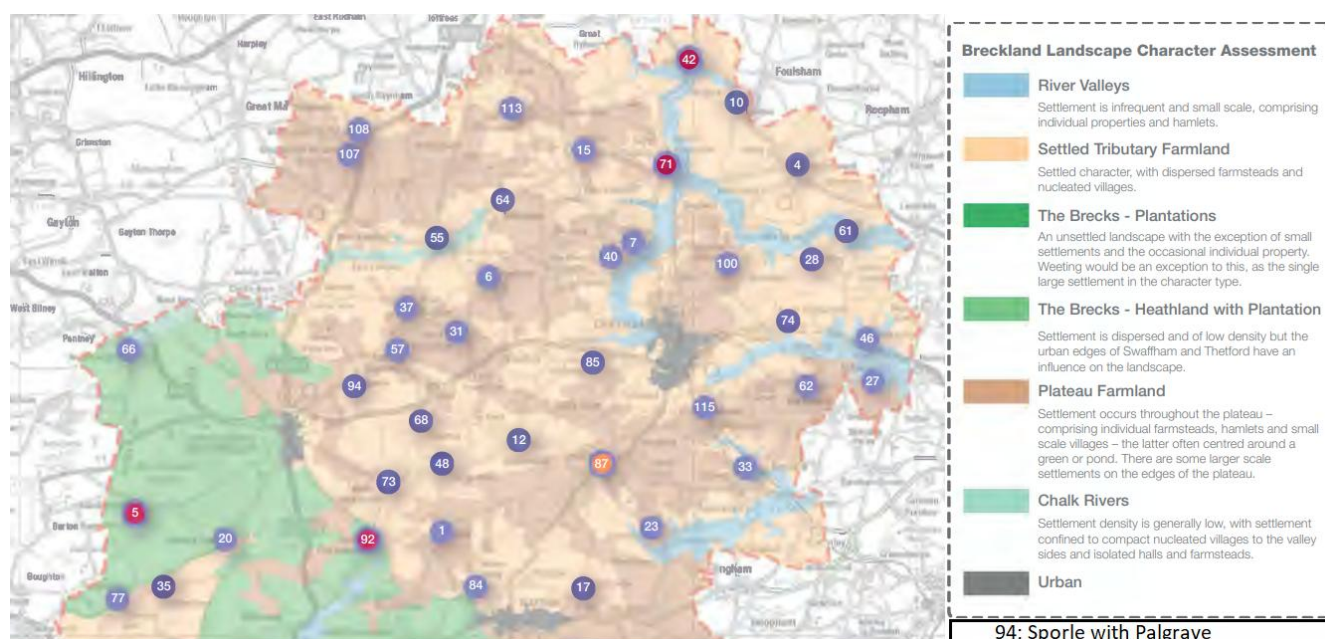
<sup>27</sup> Settlement comprising individual farmsteads, hamlets and small scale villages – the latter often centred around a green or pond. There are some larger scale settlements on the edges of the plateau.

<sup>28</sup> Settled character, with dispersed farmsteads and nucleated villages.

<sup>29</sup> Breckland District Council [Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment](#) (2022)



Figure 27: Breckland Character Assessment 2022 - showing Sporle with Palgrave (94) (Source Breckland District Council)



Agricultural villages are small settlements which initially originated as a series of dispersed buildings which have since developed into villages. The historic origins may range from farmsteads, grain milling or turnpike settlements on key routes.

In the character assessment, Breckland District Council notes that:

- Within the older historic centre of the village, residential properties are low in height and generally do not exceed three storeys. Churches form features of the villages, often providing the tallest structure.
- The older historic buildings of agricultural origin are generally located within the village core. The continued use of some farmsteads for agriculture purposes provides an important link to the land uses and practices which continue today.
- Older buildings within the village are generally characterised by attractive vernacular detailing to the facades, gables and roofs.
- Many villages have now experienced mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century development which uses non place-specific architecture and materials, diluting the character and sense of place.
- The villages typically exhibit a strong relationship with surrounding farmland which contributes to the rural identity of the settlement.
- Selective views between properties and visual links are afforded across the surrounding agricultural context, with woodland often forming a component of the view. Patterns of mature vegetation typically align the street frontage and frame key views.
- Where settlements have developed along watercourses, historically significant buildings can be found along the river.

Continuous rural row villages have:

- Linear arrangement of farmsteads and dwellings, usually built along a road.

- A row settlement with no large gaps between buildings.
- These commonly begin as interrupted rural rows which have since been infilled by development.

In the character assessment, Breckland District Council notes that these types of villages:

- Lack a single clustering or central focus, with amenities and facilities distributed along the streetscape.
- Have regular rows of historic properties which provide a distinctive feature. However, evidence of modern infill development stretching along local roads detracts from the historic linear form of the settlement type.
- Have a reduced network of local green spaces due to the pattern of infill development, detracting from the wider village setting.
- Are generally characterised by a limited palette of materials (predominantly Norfolk red brick, clay pantiles, render and timber frames).
- Have limited scope for public open space because of the continuous nature of the row.
- Work well because the higher density of housing within the village core can create a greater sense of community, alongside continuous natural surveillance as houses overlook the street.

Sporle with Palgrave is given as an example of what works well in these types of villages as “the linear settlement pattern provides linkages with the countryside and open rural views with opportunities for green corridors”<sup>30</sup>.

With regard to development in these types of villages, Breckland District Council notes that the following issues:

- When development infills within the settlement boundary there can be a loss of green space which alters the nature of the settlement and creates more urbanised environments.
- Infill or side street development can create pockets of architecture which do not relate well to the historic look of the village.
- Development inside settlement boundaries, particularly high-density development within small villages, can cause street clutter and parking issues.

At parish level, Sporle with Palgrave is characterised by a rural agricultural landscape, open skies, long views across farmland, mature hedgerows, trees and pockets of woodland. The village of Sporle has a linear form along The Street and sits partly within a shallow valley, with the stream, grass verges, small bridges, mature planting and varied building setbacks contributing to its local character. St Mary’s Church is a prominent historic landmark in views within and around the village, while Sporle Wood forms an important wooded feature on the eastern side of the parish.

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<sup>30</sup> Breckland District Council [Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment](#) (2022)

The AECOM Design Guidance and Codes provide more detailed design evidence on landscape setting, settlement edges, rural streets, green gaps, vegetation and the relationship between new development and the surrounding countryside.

Community consultation also identified a number of local views that residents value, including views around the historic centre, towards open green spaces and along rural roads.

### **Summary:**

- **The parish falls within an area characterised by flat agricultural landscapes, big skies, open views and rural character.**
- **Sporle with Palgrave's history is as an agricultural village and is now characterised as a rural continuous row village.**
- **The village has a strong relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape, with visual links to open countryside, mature vegetation, green gaps, grass verges and rural settlement edges contributing to local character.**
- **St Mary's Church, Sporle Wood, the stream along The Street, hedgerows, trees and open farmland are important features of the local landscape.**

### **Issues:**

- **Open rural views across the landscape with churches as visible landmarks are a key feature of the area and should be preserved.**
- **The scale of potential future development should be considered particularly with regard to its effects on long views, skylines and surrounding character areas.**
- **Preservation of green space is important and should be a consideration for infill development.**
- **Development that does not incorporate local materials may not blend well with the character of the area.**

## **Historic Environment**

According to the Norfolk Heritage Explorer<sup>31</sup> there are 128 records of historic artefacts, structures, buildings, and markings in the landscape within the neighbourhood area. The oldest of these are 13 artefacts that date back to middle Palaeolithic times (150,000BC-40,001BC) including prehistoric pots used for boiling water. The Heritage Explorer tells us that both Sporle and Palgrave were well established by the time of the Norman Conquest and their population, land ownership and resources were detailed separately in the Domesday Book in 1086. Sporle was a royal manor with woodland and Palgrave was held for the King by Godric and possessed a mill. During Roman times it is likely there were domestic settlements in the parish as there is evidence of pottery, coins, jewellery and tiles along with three possible roman roads running through the parish. In the early 1800s farm workers found four Saxon barrows at the northern end of Coates Common (NHER 4598). One of these contained horse bones and one contained six skeletons along with spears, shield bosses, brooches, beads and pottery urns. Several

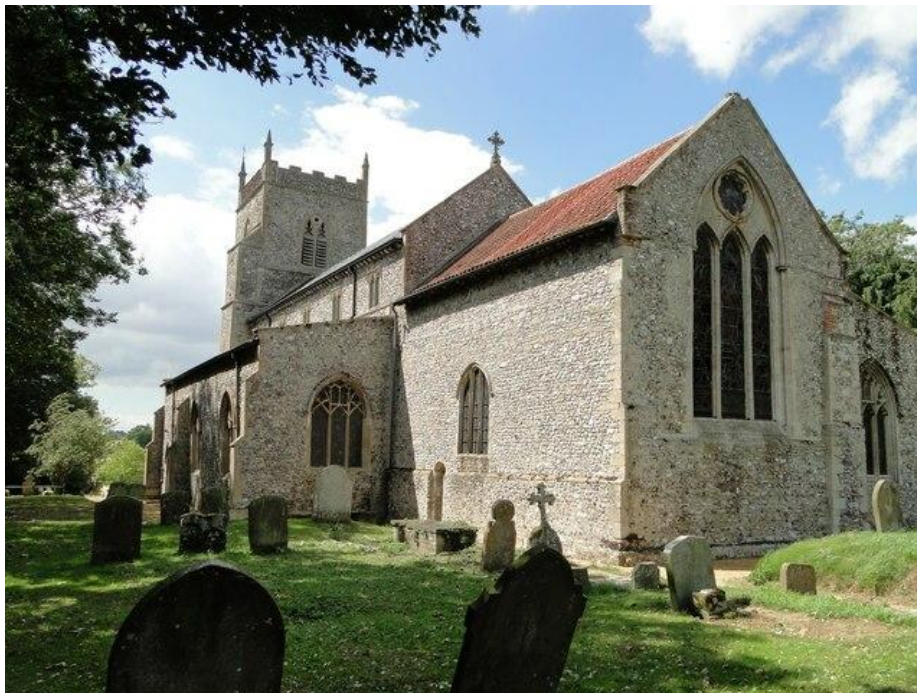
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<sup>31</sup> Norfolk Heritage Explorer [parish summary – Sporle with Palgrave](#)

unusual and exceptional Saxon finds are recorded in detail on the Norfolk Heritage Explorer.

During the medieval period there were a number of smaller settlements within the parish. Many of these were abandoned by the latter part of the period, and aerial photography and fieldwalking have identified the earthworks and cropmarks of these villages. One such village was Great Palgrave (NHER 1058), which was mentioned in Domesday and survived until the 15th century. This village never had a church but the earthworks of streets and buildings are still visible in the grass. The site of the medieval village of Great Palgrave is a scheduled monument (see below).

*Figure 28: St Mary's Church, Sporle (Source: Adrian S Pye - geograph.co.uk - licensed under Creative Commons)*



St Mary's parish church dates back to the early medieval period when there was also a Benedictine Priory Cell in the village. Other medieval sites include Sporle Wood and the moated site of Sporle Hall. By 1836 Sporle had two windmills marked on Ordnance Survey maps which produced goods until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1847 the Lynn and Dereham Railway ran through Sporle and continued to operate until 1968.

During the latter part of World War One (1916-18) Sporle with Palgrave had a military airfield (NHER 13626). At present the exact location of this airfield is unknown. There is a World War Two type 22c pillbox (NHER 32671) standing to the west of the parish, near to the A1065 road. The most recent archaeological site in the parish is a Royal Observer Corps bunker dating to the Cold War era (NHER 32671).

There are five listed buildings in the parish identified in the table and map below. There is also a scheduled monument (the deserted medieval village site of Great Palgrave) which is also shown on the map below.



| Heritage Category | Grade | List Entry Name                           |
|-------------------|-------|-------------------------------------------|
| Listing           | I     | Church of St Mary                         |
| Listing           | II    | Little Palgrave Hall                      |
| Listing           | II    | Wolferton House                           |
| Listing           | II    | Old Vicarage, The Street                  |
| Listing           | II    | Sporle War Memorial                       |
| Scheduling        | n/a   | Deserted Medieval Village, Great Palgrave |

Figure 29: Listed buildings in Sporle with Palgrave (Source: Historic England, 2024)



The historic environment contributes strongly to the character and identity of Sporle with Palgrave. St Mary's Church is a prominent landmark within the village and in views across the surrounding countryside. The historic linear form of Sporle along The Street, the varied building setbacks, grass verges, stream crossings, mature planting and relationship with surrounding farmland all contribute to the parish's sense of place. The deserted medieval village at Great Palgrave also demonstrates the long history of settlement in the parish and the archaeological sensitivity of parts of the wider countryside.

The Design Guidance and Codes also identifies the rural historic character of the streetscape as an important part of the parish's identity, particularly in the northern part of Sporle where several listed buildings are clustered.

Community consultation also showed strong support for protecting the parish's heritage. Respondents identified St Mary's Church, the war memorial, older cottages, the village hall and historic bridges as locally-valued features that contribute to the character and identity of the parish.

### **Summary:**

- **There are five listed buildings and one scheduled monument within the neighbourhood area.**
- **The Grade I listed Church of St Mary is a prominent historic landmark within the village and in views across the surrounding countryside.**
- **The deserted medieval village at Great Palgrave is a scheduled monument and demonstrates the long history of settlement in the parish.**
- **The historic linear form of Sporle along The Street, together with older buildings, grass verges, stream crossings, mature trees and the relationship with surrounding farmland, contributes to the parish's local character.**

### **Issues:**

- **Development has the potential to affect the setting and significance of designated heritage assets, particularly where it would affect St Mary's Church, the historic core of Sporle, or views towards heritage landmarks.**
- **Design, layout, scale, materials and landscaping are important in ensuring that new development responds positively to the historic character of the parish.**
- **Known archaeological assets, including the scheduled deserted medieval village at Great Palgrave, should be taken into account where relevant.**



## Glossary<sup>32</sup>

|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Affordable Housing (NPPF 2023 Definition) | <p>Affordable housing: housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:</p> <p>A. Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government’s rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).</p> <p>B. Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household’s eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.</p> <p>C. Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.</p> <p>D. Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.</p> |
| Affordable Rented Housing                 | <p>Rented housing let by registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Dark Skies                                | <p>Places where the darkness of the night sky is relatively free of interference from artificial light.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

<sup>32</sup> National Planning Policy Framework ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Designated Heritage Asset          | A World Heritage Site, Scheduled Monument, Listed Building, Protected Wreck Site, Registered Park and Garden, Registered Battlefield or Conservation Area designated under the relevant legislation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Flood Zones <sup>33</sup>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Zone 1 Low Probability</b>- Land having a less than 0.1% annual probability of river or sea flooding.</li> <li>• <b>Zone 2 Medium Probability</b>- Land having between a 1% and 0.1% annual probability of river flooding; or land having between a 0.5% and 0.1% annual probability of sea flooding.</li> <li>• <b>Zone 3a High Probability</b>- Land having a 1% or greater annual probability of river flooding; or Land having a 0.5% or greater annual probability of sea.</li> <li>• <b>Zone 3b The Functional Floodplain</b>- This zone comprises land where water from rivers or the sea has to flow or be stored in times of flood. The identification of functional floodplain should take account of local circumstances and not be defined solely on rigid probability parameters. Functional floodplain will normally comprise: land having a 3.3% or greater annual probability of flooding, with any existing flood risk management infrastructure operating effectively; or land that is designed to flood (such as a flood attenuation scheme), even if it would only flood in more extreme events (such as 0.1% annual probability of flooding).</li> </ul> |
| Groundwater flooding <sup>34</sup> | Groundwater flooding is when water under the ground (the water table) rises to the surface. Underground rooms, such as cellars and basements, are particularly at risk. Groundwater flooding is more likely where there is chalk under the ground (the bedrock). It can also happen in places with sand and gravel, such as river valleys.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Heritage Asset                     | A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Open Market Housing                | Open market housing is housing which is built by developers (which may be private companies or housing associations, or Private Registered Providers), for the purposes of sale (or rent) on the open market.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Priority Habitats                  | Species and Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Sheltered Housing                  | Sheltered housing (also known as retirement housing) means having your own flat or bungalow in a block, or on a small estate, where all the other residents are older people (usually over 55). With a few exceptions, all developments (or 'schemes') provide independent, self-contained homes with their own front doors. There are many different types of scheme, both to rent and to buy. They usually contain between 15 and 40 properties, and range in size from studio flats (or 'bedsits') through to 2 and 3 bedroomed. Properties in most schemes are designed to make life a little easier for                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

<sup>33</sup> Flood risk and coastal change - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

<sup>34</sup> Groundwater flooding - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | <p>older people - with features like raised electric sockets, lowered worktops, walk-in showers, and so on.</p> <p>Some will usually be designed to accommodate wheelchair users. And they are usually linked to an emergency alarm service (sometimes called 'community alarm service') to call help if needed. Many schemes also have their own 'manager' or 'warden', either living on-site or nearby, whose job is to manage the scheme and help arrange any services residents need. Managed schemes will also usually have some shared or communal facilities such as a lounge for residents to meet, a laundry, a guest flat and a garden.<sup>26</sup>.</p> |
| Site of Special Scientific Interest  | Sites designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Social rented housing                | Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in Section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.). Guideline target rents for this tenure are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with Homes England. <sup>27</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Surface water flooding <sup>35</sup> | Surface water flooding occurs when intense rainfall overwhelms drainage systems.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Sustainable transport mode           | Any efficient, safe, and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, ultra-low and zero emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Wildlife Corridor                    | Areas of habitat connecting wildlife populations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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<sup>35</sup> Flood risk maps for surface water: how to use the map - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))