



*Our Community*

*Our Future*

*Our Plan*

**Morpeth's Neighbourhood Plan**

# **Infrastructure Audit**

**Newcastle University**

**January 2013**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Infrastructure Audit is designed to provide a comprehensive evidence base of infrastructure within the Plan Area of Morpeth and the adjoining parishes of Hepscott, Hebron, Mitford and Pegswood in the development of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.1.2 This report has been produced on behalf of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The report is designed to be an aid for Morpeth Town Council and the adjoining Parish communities in the development of their Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.1.3 The audit provides a baseline report, analysing service provision and capacity issues that may have a possible effect on potential development patterns and proposals. The recommendations from this report will help identify a favoured development framework for the Plan. The Audit will therefore it will act as an evidence base for the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan and the Plan's soundness.

### 1.2 What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.2.1 Neighbourhood planning is described by the Department for Communities and Local Government as “a new way for communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work”. The Localism Act which was passed in 2011 gives local authorities the rights to prepare these plans in order to provide local communities with a meaningful say in which the areas they live are planned. The Morpeth Town Council Neighbourhood Plan has identified infrastructure as being one of the issues that needs to be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan will take the Infrastructure Audit, combined with the views of the public, to develop a coherent and robust strategy for the infrastructure of the Plan Area.

### 1.3 National Planning Policy Framework

- 1.3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework requires that plans are derived from “adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. Local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals” (DCLG 2012:Para156). This Infrastructure Audit will provide some of the required evidence.

## 1.4 Location of the Plan Area

- 1.4.1 The largest settlement in the Plan Area is Morpeth, lying in the valley of the River Wansbeck some 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne and has a population now approaching 15,000. Its origins go back to Norman times but the physical form of the town was established in the medieval period with the formation of the existing town centre street pattern and long burgess plots stretching from the main streets down to the River Wansbeck.
- 1.4.2 Pegswood, the Plan Area's next largest settlement is located approximately 2 miles northeast of Morpeth on the A197 Morpeth to Ashington road. The original village developed around the colliery; however, since its closure in 1969, Pegswood has increasingly become a dormitory village with people commuting to surrounding centres, particularly Cramlington and Newcastle.
- 1.4.3 Hebron village is located approximately 3 miles to the north of Morpeth on the C130 road. The village lies adjacent to the former Butterwell opencast site, where coal extraction and restoration has now been completed during the Plan period. This has resulted in an improvement to the landscape environment in the vicinity of the village.
- 1.4.4 Hepscott village is located approximately 2 miles southeast of Morpeth to the east of the A192 road. It is a popular residential village set in attractive woodland with the Hepscott Burn running through the heart of the village. In recent years residential development has taken place around a group of older houses, mainly in the form of low density executive homes.
- 1.4.5 Mitford village is located approximately 2 miles west of Morpeth on the B6343 and C149 roads, within two wooded valleys at the confluence of the rivers Wansbeck and Font and remains largely unspoilt.
- 1.4.6 Located outside of the Plan Area, Ashington town centre is a second most important centre within the county as measured by growth retail floor space, total turnover and market share. Blyth town centre is the third most important centre within the County as measured by floorspace, total turnover and market share within the study area. Northumberland County Council Town Centre and Retail Study (WYG, 2009).
- 1.4.7 Following a decline in the agricultural industry, commuting from rural areas and the expansion of alternative businesses and enterprises in rural areas has put new demands on the infrastructure in place in the Plan Area.

## 1.5 Areas of Infrastructure

1.5.1 For the purposes of this Audit the following categories have been considered relevant:

- Transport
- Energy
- Sewerage and Drainage
- Telecommunications
- Education
- Healthcare
- Community Services
- Waste Management

1.5.2 These categories have been decided on with the help of our client, in order to represent the areas of significance in the infrastructure needs of the plan area.

1.5.3 The first chapter to be examined will be transport. This section will explore the following issues which have been identified: highways congestion, buses, trains, cycling. The chapter on energy will discuss the provision of electricity and gas across the plan area and issues of sustainable energy generation. Sewerage capacity and drainage will examine capacity issues across the various settlements where available data is obtained and the implications future development will have on existing capacities.

1.5.4 Telecommunications explores the provision of telecommunications services in the Plan Area, including; Wireless and Internet, Mobile Phone Networks and Public Phones. The provision of high speed internet can be essential to economic growth, particularly in rural areas.

1.5.5 Education provides a view of all the schools in the Plan Area, reviewing their quality based on Ofsted reports, their attainment based on Department for Education tables and their demand based on the admissions numbers from the 2012 admissions. Health is analysed in terms of what provision there is within the Plan Area. As major Hospital services are provided outside the plan area what these are is analysed to demonstrate what is available and its location.

- 1.5.6 Community Services investigates the provision of essential local services provided across the Plan Area. For the purposes of this Audit, community services will review; Libraries, Post Offices, Sports facilities and leisure, Police and Fire Services, Markets, Supermarkets and Shopping, Community Centres and Village Halls, Museums Art and Entertainment and Places of Worship. Various community services which have been deemed as soft infrastructure have also been left out of this report in order to give priority to issues which are deemed more pressing. Such softer community services include... post offices; community centres; youth services; services for the elderly; churches / places of worship; cemeteries; allotments; cultural attractions – museums/galleries/theatres/cinemas.
- 1.5.7 Flood defences is clearly an important aspect of the infrastructure for the Plan Area however it will not be focused on in great detail in this report, and will only be referred to where applicable.

## 2.0 Methodology

2.1.1 The Infrastructure Audit aims to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the infrastructure across the entire Plan Area. The audit consisted of three fundamental components: the data, data collection and its presentation and analysis. This methodology provides a detailed overview of the processes undertaken which have enabled all three components to be successfully achieved.

### 2.2 Definition of Infrastructure

2.2.1 It was important to define the different forms of infrastructure to enable a clear scope, providing the audit with focus and relevance to the future preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

2.2.2 The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) document “A steps approach to infrastructure planning and delivery” (2009) was considered and informed what should be present in the audit. The following table adapted from PAS (2008) presents all infrastructures considered relevant to the Plan Area and therefore included within the Audit:

Infrastructure	Sub Categories	Service and Infrastructure Provider	Tier of Governance
Transport	Road	Highways Agency and Local Authority	National Regional Northumberland County (NCC)
	Rail	Network Rail	National
	Bus	Bus Companies and Local Authority	NCC
	Taxi	Ranks	NCC
	Airports	Airport Authorities	National Regional
	Cycle and Pedestrian Facilities	Local Authorities and Sustrans	National NCC
	Car Parking	Local Authorities and Private Providers	NCC

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Sub Categories</b>	<b>Service and Infrastructure Provider</b>	<b>Tier of Governance</b>
<b>Energy</b>	Centralised Power Generation	Ofgen and Individual Companies	National
	Transmission and Distribution system for gas and electricity	Ofgen and Individual Companies	National
	Decentralised and Renewable or Low Carbon Energy	Ofgen, Individual Companies, Local Authorities, RDA's and Energy Service Companies	NCC
	Wind Power	Private Sector	National NCC
<b>Water and Drainage</b>	Water Supply	Ofwat and individual water companies	National
	Waste Water	Local Authorities and Water Treatment Companies	NCC
	Drainage	Local Authorities and Environment Agency	NCC
<b>Waste</b>	Collection Disposal	Local Authorities and Private Sector	NCC
	Recycling	Local Authority and Private	NCC
<b>Telecommunications</b>	Broadband, Wireless and Public Phones	BT, Ofcom, individual Telco's	National NCC
	Mobile Phone Networks	Private, Ofcom	National
<b>Education</b>	Primary Education	Local Authority and Private	NCC
	Secondary Education	Local Authority and Private	NCC

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Sub Categories</b>	<b>Service and Infrastructure Provider</b>	<b>Tier of Governance</b>
	Further Education	Local Authority and Private	NCC
	Higher Education	Universities	National
	Special Needs and Disability Services	Local Authority and Private	NCC
<b>Health</b>	Hospitals	Primary Care Trust	Regional NCC
	Health Centres, GP's and Surgeries	Primary Care Trust	Regional NCC
	Elderly Care	Primary Care Trust, Local Authorities and Private	NCC
<b>Community Services</b>	Libraries	Local Authorities	NCC
	Community Centres/ Village Halls	Parish Councils and Local Authorities	NCC
	Post Offices	Local Authority	NCC
	Police Stations	Police Authority	Regional NCC
	Fire Stations	Fire Authority	Regional NCC
	Places of Worship	Individual Organisations	NCC
	Markets	Local Authorities	NCC
	Supermarkets	Private	
	Sports & Leisure Facilities	Local Authority and Private	NCC
	Museums, Arts and Entertainments	Local Authority and Private	NCC

Table 1: PAS Infrastructure Guidance for Audit

2.2.3 From the above table it is recognised that infrastructure can be split into two separate groups: Physical and social infrastructure. Physical infrastructure comprises of many particular basic

systems or hard, built structures which enable a country or community to prosper. Such things include roads, sewers and utilities. Social infrastructure likewise is considered a necessary addition to support a country or community to prosper, viewed as delivering specialised skills or services to people. It is recognised that all forms of infrastructure can be provided by both public and private sector organisations. However, over the past 20-30 diminishing public finances, the streamlining of resources and services to increase public efficiency has seen growing presences of the private sector taking responsibility for a number of public services years.

- 2.2.4 It was decided that the physical sphere of infrastructure would be the largest focus of this audit. The project brief and initial correspondence with Steering Group members has allowed the audit to focus on an identified list of issues. For example flood risk, whilst an immensely relevant issue for the Plan Area, was however being studied as an independent issue by a separate group.

### **2.3 Scope of Infrastructure Study**

- 2.3.1 A geographical boundary was first established which represented the complete surveyed area for the audit. This included key settlements; Morpeth, Pegswood, Hepscott, Mitford and Hebron and would be collectively known as 'The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Area' and referred to in this audit as the Plan Area.
- 2.3.2 An initial brief between members of the Steering Group was undertaken to develop a clear understanding of the brief instructed and the audit's fundamental focus. It was important to examine how this Infrastructure Audit will identify the existing and future needs relevant to the designated Plan Area.
- 2.3.3 A clear understanding of the necessary infrastructure deemed most relevant or 'targeted' to the designated Plan Area was first established through early discussions between the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and key members reviewing the full spectrum of both physical and social infrastructure as adapted from PAS (2009) as seen in table 1.
- 2.3.4 It was further recognised through initial discussions that the audit must not be Morpeth-centric. Instead collectively encompassing the smaller surrounding villages that have a recognised impact upon the Plans infrastructure.
- 2.3.5 Consideration was given to the importance of identifying key infrastructure which serviced to the Plan Area, however was located outside the designated boundary. This largely centred upon regional municipal infrastructure providers such as energy, transport, higher education and health

services. Lastly the audits would consider the effects of future growth upon the plan area and its existing infrastructure.

## **2.4 Adapted Steps (PAS: A steps approach to infrastructure planning and delivery)**

2.4.1 The PAS “A steps approach to infrastructure planning and delivery” was used to provide this Audit with a structured base. Infrastructure can include such a host of different features that it was important for this audit to use the PAS document in deciding the different forms of infrastructure to be covered. The steps set out in the PAS guidance are adapted to better fit the brief instructing this audit. This audit has covered steps 3, 4 and 5 set out by the PAS guidance. Step 5 has been adapted into the Growth Scenarios chapter of this audit. From the three PAS steps, 4 steps have been adapted; the following step-by-step process was implemented when conducting this audit:

### ***Step 1: Data Collection and Information Gathering***

2.4.2 This infrastructure Audit was completed as a desk based exercise, as discussed within the initial brief meeting, with the inclusion of specific local knowledge taken from open discussions and meetings. Further local opinion was provided through the Neighbourhood Plan Launch Meeting and additional community open events.

2.4.3 From the established scope of infrastructure which has been agreed in the Scope of Infrastructure Study section, data was then collected from the various private and public service providers.

2.4.4 Data was collected from the following public infrastructure sources:

- Local Authority websites, documents and existing policy or evidence gathering exercises already conducted.
- Regional level authority’s websites, documents and existing policy or evidence gathering exercises already conducted.
- National Government websites, documents and existing policy or evidence gathering exercises already conducted.

2.4.5 Data was collected from the following private infrastructure sources:

- Private infrastructure provider’s websites, such as Northumbrian Water and Arriva, documents and existing assessment exercises already conducted.

- 2.4.6 Data was also collected from interviews, written discussions and feedback from Neighbourhood Plan Launch/ Consultation Event meetings.
- 2.4.7 Data was also obtained from government advisory bodies or regulators (such as Ofgem and Sustrans).
- 2.4.8 Further public responses were collected from three separate 'Neighbourhood Plan Open Evenings' at Mitford, Pegswood and Morpeth. These responses provided a fundamental element of 'local knowledge' which has been used to as further analyst against the data as discussed above.

### ***Step 2: Standards and Procedures***

- 2.4.9 The relevant National and Local Planning Policy (NPPF, Core Strategy and its evidence base) were reviewed, thereby providing a key understanding of the requirements and standards for particular aspects of infrastructure. It is important to note service standards vary depending upon geographical location, from urban to rural, due to spatial distribution and population of settlements.
- 2.4.10 Using the PAS guidance on infrastructure, initial research into the appropriate service providers gives an approximate understanding of their responsibilities and required standards.
- 2.4.11 Local standards were attained through contact with the Northumberland County Council. This enabled relevant policies procedures to be identified where services were outlined as being provided by Northumberland County Council. These standards often reflected guidance as set at national level and is therefore common across the country. This is for example the position with identifying standards of education as outlined by Department of Education and Ofsted.
- 2.4.12 National Standards were attained through National Policies, for example with the National Planning Policy Framework and rail standards as set by Ofgem and the Department of Transport.
- 2.4.13 Further levels of provision and service standards have been identified from many independent, but respected organisations which provide 'best practice guidance'. For example, guidance for community cycle provision and engagement is provided by the charity Sustrans.
- 2.4.14 The standards, where found and considered for each form of infrastructure have been provided within the various infrastructure audit topics.

### ***Step 3: Data Analysis and Impact on Growth***

- 2.4.15 Data collected from all sources discussed in Step 1 were amalgamated to present an overall provision of services. The surveyed provision has been cross referenced against known existing and predicted future demands to ensure provision is representative of known national and local requirements.
- 2.4.16 The data was further compared against the standards which were established in Step 2: Standards and Procedures at both local and national levels. In doing this, the known standards allowed further analysis; highlighting particular limitations, over-provision or sufficient capacity within infrastructure. Furthermore this has enabled problematic areas of infrastructure to be highlighted which the Neighbourhood Plan, it is considered, should have particular regards to during its future preparation.
- 2.4.17 Growth in the area has been expressed in this audit as the quantum figure of 75 – 100 dwellings growth per annum for the Plan Area, as derived from The Northumberland Five Year Deliverable Sites Assessment (2012). This figure is used to discuss the infrastructure limitations identified by the audit and their impact on the location of future growth.

### ***Step 4: Conclusions***

- 2.4.18 Appropriate recommendations were noted where it was thought clear intervention has been considered as imperative for the continued maintenance and future success of that particular aspect of infrastructure. On occasion this included the spatial re-organisation of infrastructure services taken specific regards to the intended growth areas of the Plan Area.
- 2.4.19 The analysis of the data has been the main and overriding aim of this audit. It has presented the opportunity to provide potential recommendations for improving the infrastructure, both physical and social, in the area. Any recommendations offered throughout the audit, it has to be recognised that these have not been investigated, but from the evidence presented, suggestions for future investigation.

## Infrastructure Audit

This section breaks down infrastructure into the following categories which are discussed and analysed in detail:

- Transport
- Energy
- Sewerage and Drainage
- Telecommunications
- Education
- Healthcare
- Community Services
- Waste and Recycling Facilities

## 3.0 Transport

### 3.1 Highways Network

- 3.1.1 Northumberland County Council is responsible for the service and maintenance of all roads within the Plan Area, except the A1 which the Highways Authority takes responsibility of. The Existing Highway network is set out within Appendix 2.1.
- 3.1.2 Northumberland County Council state a regular inspection of all adopted highways is undertaken, with repairs arranged where particular parts of the highway are in needs of attention and considered to be dangerous. Furthermore annual surveys are conducted by the Council to assess the condition of all roads in accordance with national standards. All repairs are carried out in accordance with a suitable timescale taking regards to the repairs risk, the type of road, and the volume of traffic using the road (Northumberland County Council, 2012d).
- 3.1.3 The A1 is the main trunk road running north to south along the east coast of England. It connects the Plan Area to the wider regional communities, most importantly Newcastle to the south, but also Scotland, including Edinburgh to the north. Through the Plan Area the A1 is dual carriage, however north of Morpeth the road decreases to only single carriageway and splits to form the A697. Growing support has been voiced for the need to widen the A1 north of Morpeth to dual carriageway status to improve the flow of traffic towards Scotland. In May 2011 the northern section of the A1 was designated as a 'Route of Strategic National Importance'. Although this new strategic status does not secure future funding for the roads widening, it does however encourage government policy to recognises its national importance and contributions to national freight, tourism and economic benefits to and from the Scottish borders (DfT, 2012).
- 3.1.4 Morpeth is currently serviced by two single carriageways, the A197 and A192, together designated by Northumberland County Council as freight roads. Both roads cut north-south through the town centre meeting at Telford Bridge; the main vehicle crossing point over the River Wansbeck. Within the Plan Area only five additional vehicle bridges cross the Wansbeck; these are Oldgate Bridge located to the east of Morpeth which is single carriageway and both smaller single car width Highford and Lowford Bridge situated along the minor B6343-Mitford Road. The final two remaining vehicle bridges located in the Plan Area are Mitford Bridge also along the B6343 and a small narrow single car width bridge to the south of Mitford leading towards Molesden.

- 3.1.5 Serving the remainder of the Plan Area are predominantly either minor unclassified or 'B' roads. The B6343 links Mitford to Morpeth from the west and is a designated Freight Road. North of the Plan Area, Hebron is serviced by a minor 'B' road which joins the A192 on the northern proximity of Morpeth's conurbation. Alternative road access can be sought via the A1.
- 3.1.6 In February 2007 construction was completed on the new 2.7km, single carriageway bypass at Pegswood, costing approximately £9.2 million and forms part of the A197 linking Morpeth and Ashington (Pegswood Bypass, 2012). The former A197 bisected through the centre of Pegswood and carried approximately 9,000 vehicles a day, including 1000 lorries (Pegswood Bypass, 2012). Since the construction of the bypass, residents report that traffic levels had fallen overall. Meeting with Parish Councillors for Pegswood, the general agreement was the Bypass had eased the daily volume of traffic and HGVs travelling through the village, making it safer and more attractive for existing and prospective residents.
- 3.1.7 Towards the south of the Plan Area, Hepscoth is serviced by a minor single carriageway which links the A192 with the A197, both of which lead to Morpeth to the north and Bedlington to the south.
- 3.1.8 The Plan Area is dependent on many of its roads, this is obvious by the volume of traffic and congestion which is reported along its major transport routes. This dependence is connected with two key factors within the district of Castle Morpeth: Car Ownership and resident's mode of travel to work. Castle Morpeth 'has the highest percentage of people who travel to work as a car driver alone at 64%' (AECOM, 2010:23) in the whole of Northumberland, including the highest car ownership. The high volume of cars coupled with the predominantly small road network causes problems which is regularly reported to be congested, and delays to public transport.

### ***Morpeth Northern Bypass***

- 3.1.9 Funding for Morpeth's Northern Bypass was approved in December 2011. This is an important and final chapter for Northumberland Council in its construction of an A1-South East Northumberland Strategic Link Road which will connect the A197 (Pegswood's new bypass) at Whorral Bank with the A1 Trunk Road at Fairmoor. The scheme, after securing its projected £30 million from the Department of Transport and Northumberland Council, is currently in the process of preparing its Development Consent Order submission to the Secretary of State for December 2012.
- 3.1.10 The proposed bypass will have a significant impact upon Morpeth and its surrounding highways network: Decreasing congestion, noise, pollution and increasing the reliability and safety of

Morpeth's inner roads. The bypass will re-route traffic around the town's northern conurbation to the A1. With its successful implementation, traffic modelling indicates an approximate 22% decrease in the volume of traffic using the A192 through Morpeth's Town Centre. This is significant as 'traffic in Morpeth is expected to rise by 20% over the next 20 years. It is predicted once open; the new bypass will carry approximately 7,500-8,000 vehicles a day. (Morpeth Northern Bypass, 2012)

3.1.11 In securing better access to regional and national road networks, the new bypass will benefit and support future businesses within the Plan Area and beyond. Furthermore, the bypass will secure modern and safe access for the future development of St. Georges Hospital site and designated Employment Land, while preparing for the future demands of the local highways network. The Bypass should also help alleviate school term pressures from the additional school runs for King Edward VI School north of Morpeth Centre. It is worth further noting for residents and businesses the benefits accomplished with Morpeth's first bypass: the construction of the A1. Previously, traffic flowed through the centre of Morpeth until the A1 Bypass was opened in 1970.

### ***Highways Maintenance***

3.1.12 Within all three community consultation events held at Pegswood, Mitford and Morpeth, highway maintenance was raised. Within Mitford and Pegswood locals expressed concerns with the level of maintenance which was needed to footpaths, and in certain cases their need to be replaced. Furthermore residents in Mitford expressed concern for the local road B6343 and the maintenance of Mitford Bridge. If the bridge was to become damaged and needed closure for urgent repairs, Mitford would become incredibly isolated with it being one of the few bridges nearby to cross the river which provides access to services within Morpeth and the A1.

3.1.13 The Plan Area is predominately rural; therefore maintenance is vital to provided open and safe access to isolated houses and communities allowing themselves to continue their daily lives. This is increasingly important during the winter months that roads are well maintained and gritted, allowing important public services, such as buses, to run and serve the communities which depend upon such services. It is however unfortunate that most of the services serving the Plan Area's smaller settlements have now been lost due to local government cuts. As displayed within Appendix 2.6, maps indicate the local roads which are gritted by Northumberland County Council. All category 'A' roads are gritted through and surrounding Morpeth. Northumberland County Council was provided £1.5 million of emergency funding towards road maintenance and potholes following the extreme winter weather experienced in 2009/10.

## ***Highways Congestion***

- 3.1.14 As noted within the Castle Morpeth's draft Core Strategy "car ownership rates [within Castle Morpeth] are high with 81% owning a car compared with the national average of 73% and the regional average of 64%" (Castle Morpeth Borough Council: 2008:91). Although this figure is not representative for the particular locality of the Plan Area, it is still a significant figure which is unlikely to decrease by a significant percentage for it to become permissible. Congestion within the Plan Area is an increasingly concerning issue which needs to be addressed. Part of that solution has already been discussed above with the probable construction of Morpeth's Northern Bypass.
- 3.1.15 The Northumberland Local Transport Plan Evidence Base July 2010 (NLTP) produced by AECOM highlights concerns with highway congestion across the county. Within the report, it identifies the A197 Telford Bridge as having a significant localised congestion problem. A problem which was well conversed by residents across the Plan Area during the exhibition of neighbourhood open events. The report states that Telford Bridge has seen an increase over recent years in traffic volumes, approximately 5,000 vehicles between 2003 and 2009 (an annual growth of 6.1%), and therefore consider to be operating above capacity. The report states: "Congestion on the A197 Telford Bridge will impact on the Economic vitality of Morpeth as well as impacting on the quality of life for local residents and tourists who are visiting the area; particularly since it is the main route through the centre of Morpeth" (AECOM, 2010:35).
- 3.1.16 The NLTP identifies congestion at Telford Bridge, Mafeking Roundabout, and Stobhill Industrial Estate along the A192 causes 'delays to bus services due to the volume of traffic during AM and PM peak' (AECOM, 2010:40) times, thereby having a negative effect on the operation of public transport services and consequently lead to public opinion that bus services are a less desirable mode of transport thereby resorting back to car travel. Further consideration should be given to the impacts of congestion along the A1, especially where the A1 decreases to single carriageway north of Morpeth. The impact of congestion is further intensified where HGV's are legally restricted to speeds of 40 mph along single carriageway causing potential delays for residents and businesses.
- 3.1.17 Since the NLTP report, traffic lights have been installed at Telford Bridge along Bridge Street and Dark Lane (A197) to control the flow of traffic. The lights were funded by Dransfeild, the developers of Morpeth's fifth Supermarket located along Dark Lane, as a solution to mitigate the effects of increased traffic attributed to the development. Initial results appear to be mixed. The lights do control the large volume of traffic in an ordered system allowing vehicles to cross the

flow of traffic without holding others up. However there is strong opinion for the lights removal from many residents, as noted from the results of the open event held within the local communities. [insert community comments and Funding from Dransfeild the developer of the new supermarket to mitigate the ]

3.1.18 Congestion is a problem at several junctions in Morpeth during morning and evening rush hours and further exacerbated during school terms. Particular junction Appleby's corner with Manchester and Newgate Street and Dogger Bank. The junction is operated by traffic lights however there is a high volume of vehicles seeking to turn right along Manchester Street towards the supermarkets and bus stations. Congestion at Applebys Corner further strains public bus services. Dogger Bank, the B6343, is one of the few roads leading towards Mitford. The junction is located along Newgate Street (A192) one of the main arterial routes through Morpeth and is not operated by traffic lights. Vehicles often become stuck for a considerable period of time on Dogger Bank seeking to turn right down Newgate Street into Morpeth's Centre as traffic flows prohibits vehicles from crossing the road. This provides considerable issues for both Chantry and Newminster Middle School's starting and finishing during term time. Further problematic junctions related to congestion can be seen in Appendix 2.2

3.1.19 Traffic Management will be fundamental in securing an appropriate highway network which can effectively distribute traffic smoothly and quickly through Morpeth's historic road layout. The school run affects the above junctions mentioned Telford Bridge, Dogger Bank and Manchester Street due to the spatial distribution of schools across Morpeth; two schools located along Mitford Road and Morpeth First School located in the centre of Morpeth adjacent to Telford Bridge. As previously mentioned it is expected the new Northern Bypass will help alleviate congestion associated with school travel during school terms, especially for King Edward VI high school.



Figure 1: Telford Bridge (Source: Author's Own, 2012)

### ***Highways Safety***

- 3.1.20 Crashmap (2012) is an online website which spatially references all road traffic accidents annually. This data is collected by the police, which are recorded by the National Statistics Authority and the Department of Transport each year. Crashmap also provides access to police incident reports for each recorded accident. Accidents have been recorded since 2005 and range between severity levels fatal, serious and slight.
- 3.1.21 The maps located the Appendix 2.7 shows the position of all road traffic accidents since 2005 for each settlement: Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford, Morpeth and Pegswood within the Plan Area. These maps indicate a high level of 'Slight' accidents across the majority of the settlements highways network; particularly those most direct and of higher usage. Morpeth indicates the highest proportion of incidents which is not surprising considering its volume of traffic. A large proportion of accidents are clustered principally within its centre, along Bridge Street, Damside-Dark Lane, and Newgate Street.

## 3.2 Car Parking

3.2.1 Car parking within the Plan Area is a considerable issue. Car ownership within Castle Morpeth as already stated is considerably high, furthermore being predominately rural in character, there is a high reliance upon the private car from many trips, and this is therefore a contributory factor to local congestion within Morpeth's Town centre couple with diminishing public bus services. Northumberland County Council set out their car parking standards within the current Castle Morpeth Local Plan 2003 which requires new development to provide appropriate levels of parking spaces associated with the developments use.



Figure 2: Long Stay Car Park, Dark Lane (Source: Author's Own, 2012)

3.2.2 The table below indicates all designated Northumberland County Council car parks. This list is not comprehensive of all of the Plan Area's car parking spaces available, including that of on-street parking. It is recognised that there may be further available car parking on private land and/or undesignated locations.

<b>Car Park Location</b>	<b>Duration/Maximum Stay</b>	<b>Charge</b>
<b>Hebron</b>		
No Designated Parking Spaces		
<b>Hepscott</b>		
No Designated Parking Spaces		
<b>Mitford</b>		
No Designated Parking Spaces		
<b>Morpeth</b>		
Back Riggs North Car Park	3 hours	30 minutes £0.30  1 hour £0.60  2 hours £1.00  3 hours £1.30
Castle Square Car Park	3 hours	
Corporation Yard Car Park	3 hours	
Dacre Street Car Park	3 hours	
Newmarket East Car Park	3 hours	
Newmarket West Car Park	3 hours	
Stanley Terrace North Car Park	3 hours	
Stanley Terrace South Car Park	3 hours	
Whalebone Lane Car Park	3 hours	
Dark Lane Car Park	All Day	
St James Car Park	All Day	1 hour £0.60
Grey's Yard Car Park	All Day	2 hours £1.00

<b>Car Park Location</b>	<b>Duration/Maximum Stay</b>	<b>Charge</b>
Matheson's Gardens Car Park	All Day	3 hours £1.30
The Terrace Car Park	All Day	4 hours £1.80 All Day £2.00
<b>Pegswood</b>		
Co-op Car Park	All Day	Free

Table 2: Plan Area Parking Provision and Charges

- 3.2.3 It should be recognised an additional car park is in the process of being developed; the new undercroft Staithes Lane long stay car park is under construction as part of the new supermarket development along Dark Lane.
- 3.2.4 Morpeth has a considerable issue with parking as many local residents identified at the local Neighbourhood Plan Launch Events. Issues which were common included the availability of spaces especially near the town centre and pricing of car parks within Morpeth. However in comparison to other large settlements in Northumberland (please refer to Appendix 2.3), Morpeth's parking charges are approximately the same and on occasion cheaper. For example, Hexham, Corbridge, car parks charge £1.20 for 3hrs; this is only 10p cheaper than that charged for the equivalent stay in Morpeth. Car parks within Wooler, Berwick and Alnwick charge considerably more for 3 hours stay within its car parks, approximately between £2.00 and £2.40. Increased bus and coach parking has been recognised as a necessity within Northumberland's Local Transport Plan and its Parking Strategy 2011. The Northumberland Parking Strategy indicates priority will be given to Morpeth Town Centre as a key location to improve and increase coach parking facilities relevant to the tourism industry (Northumberland County Council, 2011:16). The NLTP further states the economic implications with inadequate coach parking provision:
- 3.2.5 'Particularly in market towns, is also impacting on the economy of the area with the local tourism industry missing out on the revenue those tourists can bring. This is particularly relevant when considering passing trade from coaches on route to/from Scotland who are required by law to stop and rest at certain intervals. If coach parking facilities were available, market towns could benefit from this. As it is, coaches are finding alternative places to stop. The most notable

example where this occurs is the Highly Gate Garden Centre just off the A1 which is being used as a coach rest point instead of the market town of Morpeth' (AECOM, 2010:50)

- 3.2.6 Pegswood previously had no designated car parking spaces within the village until parking spaces were constructed with funds available from the new bypass in 2007. Local residents report the additional spaces were welcomed as previous parking along the street was dangerous and blocked vehicles views.
- 3.2.7 For the remaining villages Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford there are no formal parking spaces designated. Instead vehicles are parked on kerbs, along the road and at informal spaces such as church, village hall and public houses' car parks as when and where needs be.

### **3.3 Buses**

- 3.3.1 The Plan Area is of a predominantly rural setting, consequently buses are considered of the highest importance in terms of public transport provision. Public buses offer the only connection between many of the villages. All services which branch out from Morpeth which together form an increasingly limited network which is fundamental to the everyday lives of many especially the elderly and those without a car. Furthermore, buses form an essential network of public transport across the whole of Northumberland, linking the Plan Area to additional important towns and conurbations such as Tyne and Wear, Newcastle and Sunderland which offers access to employment and important services.
- 3.3.2 In April 2012 a review of local bus services was undertaken by Northumberland County Council as part of its financial restructure. All bus services which did not operate commercially, thereby run through subsidisation exceeding £5.00 per passenger, would face possible closure unless offers to help assist publicising services or increasing passenger use were utilised. Northumberland Council state services 835/805 operated by Snaith, serving Hebron and running Wednesdays only; and 79 operated by Snaith, serving Mitford and running Wednesday only are both under review. After further discussions with Parish Councillors, it is now understood that both services 835/805 and 79 do not operate.
- 3.3.3 Much of Northumberland's local bus network runs without control or subsidy from the Northumberland County Council. Arriva is the main bus operator within the Plan Area. Currently only Morpeth and Pegswood are served with daily buses. Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford are not served by buses. This is a growing issue with recent budget cuts effecting subsidies towards the running costs of services. As the NLTP notes; "A further issue is the cost of public transport with ticket prices often reflecting the higher operating costs of public transport in rural areas. This is

reflected in the fact that only 41.2% of the population of North Northumberland is satisfied with their local bus service. It often leaves people reliant on their car to access the services and facilities they desire.” (AECOM, 2010:4)

3.3.4 Morpeth is a transport hub and interchange for buses with the bus station located within the town centre adjacent to Sanderson Arcade and Morrison’s Supermarket. In 2007 major regeneration of Morpeth’s town centre was undertaken, which included the provision of a new bus station. Morpeth bus station is unstaffed and managed by the Sanderson Arcade operators. Morpeth bus station has an adjacent car park associated with Morrison’s Supermarket with spaces available for approximately 50 vehicles. Morpeth’s bus station includes the following routes and buses across the Plan Area:

Route Number	Key Destinations					
2	Morpeth Bus Station	Morpeth Train Station (Shields Road)	Bedlington	Blyth Bus Station		
X14	Newcastle Haymarket Bus Station	Regents Centre Metro	Newcastle Race Course	Morpeth Train Station (Shields Road)	Morpeth Bus Station	Morpeth Chantry School
33	Morpeth Bus Station	Lancaster Park	Northgate Hospital			
35	Morpeth Bus Station	Pegswood	Ashington Bus Station	North Seaton	Newbiggin	
36	Morpeth Bus Station	Morpeth Train Station (Shields Road)	Ashington Bus Station			
38	Stobhill	Morpeth Train Station(Shields Road)	Morpeth Bus Station			
44(A)	Morpeth Chantry	Morpeth Bus Station	Morpeth Train	Hepscott Park	Regents Centre	Newcastle Haymarket

Route Number	Key Destinations					
	School		Station (Shields Road)		Metro	Bus Station
100	Morpeth Bus Station	Morpeth County Hall	Newcastle Airport	Ponteland	Kirkley Hall College	
X15	Newcastle Haymarket Bus Station	Regents Centre Metro	Morpeth Bus Station	Alnwick Bus Station	Berwick Train Station	
X18	Newcastle Haymarket Bus Station	Regents Centre Metro	Morpeth Bus Station	Pegswood	Alnwick Bus Station	Berwick Train Station

Table 3: Plan Area Buses and Scheduled Routes

3.3.5 The following table shows the bus services which serve each settlement within the Plan Area:

	Bus Services
<b>Hebron</b>	No Services Available
<b>Hepscott</b>	No Services Available
<b>Mitford</b>	No Services Available
<b>Morpeth</b>	2, X14, 33, 35, 38, 44, 100, X15, X18
<b>Pegswood</b>	35, X18

Table 4: Plan Area Bus Services

3.3.6 Please refer to Appendix 2.4 which highlights the routes and timetables of buses listed above.

3.3.7 As identified from the table above, Morpeth is well served by buses. Services are provided to the fundamental service provision such as the County Hall, Morpeth Train Station, the Northgate Hospital and large residential population to the south of Morpeth at Stobhill. National Express operates two daily coach services from Edinburgh down to London; stopping at Morpeth Bus Station. The service offers additional destination points including, Newcastle, Alnwick and

Berwick-upon-Tweed. The service 100 bus provides regular direct links to Newcastle Airport from Morpeth during weekdays approximately every two hours.

- 3.3.8 Pegswood is only served by two bus services; the 35 which operates approximately every 20 minutes during the day and the X18 which is operates hourly. It should be noted that there are further school buses which run regular trips morning and afternoon during term time to Pegswood and beyond.
- 3.3.9 From the consultation events held within Pegswood, residents were concerned that the bus service which formerly passed through the southern side of Pegswood along Stanton Drive had ceased. Elderly residents found the previous services detour through Pegswood particularly useful, using the service to visit the medical centre and pharmacy located on Stanton Drive.
- 3.3.10 Pegswood have completed recent consultation on the arrangement of a six month long community 16 seat bus service replacements after Arriva [bus operator] in September 2012 removed an hourly service between Widdrington Station and Morpeth via Pegswood Health Centre. The community consultation which included a comprehensive questionnaire to the residents of Pegswood and Longhirst Parishes was undertaken to gauge local response. Unfortunately response was not suffice to warrant the schemes viability, even after funding from the Parish Council and County Council was secured.
- 3.3.11 Further discussions with Parish Councillors revealed consideration for a small long stay park and ride scheme operating from Pegswood into Morpeth. It was considered the availability of cheap and secure long stay parking coupled with a reliable and frequent short bus journey into the centre of Morpeth would have considerable benefits. The long stay car park has the potential to attract daily commuters from driving into Morpeth, easing congestion and freeing up potential car parking spaces for short stay customers. Benefits would not only be restricted to Morpeth but would include Pegswood. An increase footfall would help support local small shops and services operating in the village and even attract new businesses.
- 3.3.12 The NLTP (2010) identifies the impact highways congestion is having on the operational capabilities of Bus operators, as previously mentioned above. The report notes that where bus operations are compromised, journeys will be lengthened and unreliable with any costs incurred by operators likely to be passed on to passengers.
- 3.3.13 Mitford expressed concern over the lack of a public bus service to connect Mitford with the surrounding settlements and parishes. Furthermore concerns were raised that with public transport links between rural communities, limited opportunity is available for residents to remain

in the village and seek employment elsewhere. It was also noted the lack of transport isolated elderly residents feeling ‘marooned’ within the village. It would appear that there is strong voice for the existence of a Bus Service. However, the viability and high passenger usage is fundamental in securing a service as funds for Northumberland are limited as previously stated within their own April 2012 review. Furthermore, Pegswood have tried to meet similar concerns with the lack of public transport provision, but have found it difficult without committed passenger numbers.



Figure 3: Morpeth Bus Station (Source: Author’s Own, 2012)

### 3.4 Rail

- 3.4.1 Across the entire Plan Area there are only two train stations in operation: Morpeth and Pegswood. Both stations are located along the East Coast Main Line running north to south, from Edinburgh to Kings Cross London. Three service providers operate along the line, Cross Country, East Coast and Northern Rail.

### ***Morpeth Railway Station***

- 3.4.2 Morpeth Railway Station, the larger and most active of the two is located approximately 10 minutes' walk from Morpeth Town Centre south of the River Wansbeck along the A192-Shields Road. The station has approximately 40 train services stopping during the week to both Newcastle and Edinburgh from two platforms. The station facilities include a 72 space car park, a bus stop located on Shields Road, cycle storage and a taxi rank. The station only offers part-time staffing, which means customer assistance and services are limited. Due to the stations high volume of passengers, predominately commuters, the station has recently had an extension to the car park creating more spaces and avoiding cars parked on the side of nearby roads (National Rail, 2012a).
- 3.4.3 The station is served by three service providers, East Coast, Cross Country and Northern Rail with a total of 21 southbound and 22 northbound services Monday to Friday. Morpeth Station has approximately two trains an hour until midday, then hourly until 17:00 where it reverts back to two an hour. In the evenings there is a large gap between 20:00 and 22:26 where no trains operate. East Coast trains run three services from Morpeth to London's Kings Cross in both directions, with Northern Rail providing local commuter services to Newcastle and Gateshead's Metro Centre, whilst also providing access to a wider range of national services from Newcastle Central Station. Please see Appendix 2.5 for further timetable details.
- 3.4.4 The trains offer important links to key employment destinations outside of the Plan Area which serves not only Morpeth, but the remainder of the Plan Area also. Such employment areas include Tynedale and Newcastle within Northumberland; further opportunities include Edinburgh, London and additional regional cities such as York, Leeds and Darlington. This vital service means Morpeth can attract and support a new population into the community. It is for this reason Morpeth is a designated growth point within Northumberland.
- 3.4.5 The Northumberland Local Travel Plan notes that whilst there are no trains from Morpeth to Newcastle currently operating above capacity, there are several services where overcrowding during rush hours are of concern. Furthermore, Castle Morpeth has the highest percentage of its working population using the car as transport to work; therefore it is unlikely that current rail services could accommodate much of a modal shift with future support for sustainable travel away from vehicle dependence.

### ***Pegswood Railway Station***

- 3.4.6 Pegswood Railway Station is located to the south of the Village, just north of the new Pegswood bypass (A197) along Dark Lane. The station is unstaffed and offers limited facilities. There is no designated car parking or taxi rank.
- 3.4.7 Pegswood Station is served only by Northern Rail which runs between Gateshead's Metro Centre and Chathill. During week days, the station is served by two trains only; 07:50 and 1943, both traveling south to Morpeth and onto Newcastle (National Rail, 2012b). There is only one train returning from Newcastle and Morpeth which arrives into Pegswood Station at 18:12. Saturdays operate to a similar schedule, while no trains run on a Sunday. Please see Appendix 2.5 for further timetable details.
- 3.4.8 Although the village still has an operating station, the times are not beneficial to all commuters or shoppers leaving little flexibility thereby making rail an unpopular mode of transport. It would further be considered as a reasonable expectation for commuters of Pegswood to ignore the service within its village and use those provided within Morpeth. Morpeth Station provides an additional four services in the morning; both earlier and later, thereby offering the commuter flexibility. Likewise for commuters returning to Pegswood, the service only provides one train. This problem further exacerbates car parking and congestion in and around Morpeth during peak hours.
- 3.4.9 Discussions with the Parish Councillors for Pegswood raised concerns over the stations accessibility for users and the platforms boarding on and off trains. Additional comments also raised, included the frequency and timing of trains currently in operation, as previously discussed, with the opportunity for additional services.
- 3.4.10 SENRUG is a local campaign group which argues for 'better rail services in South East Northumberland and to represent the interests of current rail users' (SENRUG, 2012). SENRUG campaigns for an increased frequency of intercity services to and from Morpeth train Station; amendment of existing timetables to provide greater consistency and clarity in arrival and departure of trains; greater services available from existing Pegswood Station; and finally extend the local service north to Berwick upon Tweed to create better regional access and mobility, while also avoiding traveling south to Newcastle, to access services north to Edinburgh and Berwick-upon-Tweed as currently exists.

## **3.5 Cycling**

- 3.5.1 Within the Plan Area there is one Strategic Cycling Network route running adjacent with the new Pegswood Bypass, leading on to Ashington and the Coast. Pegswood Bypass provides a separate 3 metre cycle and pedestrian pathway free of traffic. The proposed new Morpeth Bypass will also provide a continuous 3 metre wide cycle and pedestrian pathway. There are two designated local cycle network routes to the south of Morpeth.
- 3.5.2 Across the remainder of the Plan Area cycle highways and provision for safe cycling is limited. Many of the roads due to their size and poor maintenance of footpaths offer limited opportunities for people to cycle safely around the Plan Area, thereby discouraging cycling by local residents within communities.
- 3.5.3 Furthermore, from Consultation Events held in Mitford, locals were concerned about the lack of cycle paths connecting the Village with Morpeth and additional parishes. It was also noted the poor quality of roads, 60mph speed limits and small country lanes with sharp bends deterred resident's preference to cycle. Links between the communities need to be opened up, with new green pathways created for safe, quick and pleasant cycle travel through the promotion of a Plan Cycle Network. Local residents also called on further provision of covered cycle storage facilities within close proximity of Morpeth's shopping centre to promote shopping.
- 3.5.4 The Northumberland Local Transport Plan Evidence Base July 2010 (NLTP) comments on the lack of cycling provision across the majority of Northumberland, especially within more rural location. The LTP also recognises the benefits linking up local areas with the National Cycle Network helping to encourage cycling among residents and attract tourists; stating; 'cyclists are an important attractor of tourists to the area and help bring in essential revenue for the tourism industry' (AECOM, 2010:21). It is therefore important that cycle provision is highlighted and developed within the Plan Area, with roads and pathways well maintained.
- 3.5.5 The Plan Area may also benefit from the work provided by Sustrans to encourage cycle provision. Sustrans is one of the UK's leading charities engaging local people, businesses and communities to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling, including the use of public transport. Sustrans helps communities and individuals to provide 'creative, innovative and practical solutions to the transport challenges affecting us all' (Sustrans, 2012).
- 3.5.6 Sustrans can provide fundamental financial and knowledge based support to help implement cycle schemes. Such schemes such as the Link to Schools, funded by the Department of Transport and the Local Authority, Sustrans helps connect schools with their communities and the National Cycle Network to encourage safe travel of local children to school via cycling. The

benefits to the wider community are considerable. Through decreased school car travel this reduces congestion (as already discussed a major issue within Morpeth) and improves road safety.

- 3.5.7 A good example of a community Active Travel Project is within Ashington. Although located outside the Plan Area, the nearby town together with help from Sustrans have helped residents and businesses to increase the level of cycling. The project comprises of simple yet effective activities and projects such as cycle rides and training, cycle maintenance training, bike repair drop-in sessions and bike recycling and loan schemes.

### **3.6 Taxis**

- 3.6.1 Across Northumberland, taxis are registered, licensed and regulated under the Northumberland County Council Hackney Carriage and Licensing Policy (2010). Within the County there are six designated 'Hackney Carriage Zones', each zone mirroring that of each district council. The Plan Area is therefore located within the Castle Morpeth Zone.
- 3.6.2 The Plan Area is host to ten known taxi firms currently operational. Of these, eight operate within Morpeth and are as follow: Just Taxis – Morpeth, Express Taxis, Beck & Call, Highway Taxis, Ace Central Taxis, Abbey Taxis, Rustys, and Morpeth Mini Cabs. The remaining two firms operate from Pegswood's, these are: Kensway Travel and Castle Taxis. Although the above firms are located within the Plan Area, it must be recognised that other external firms located outside of the designated Plan Area will also be operational.
- 3.6.3 It is important to highlight the provision of taxis of which they complete a broad network of accessibility and public transport within the Plan Area. Taxis are important in offering an alternative solution of transport, especially within predominately rural communities akin to the Plan Area which have limited public transport opportunities and bus routes in contrast to that of an urban environment. The council further highlight the important role taxis fill within such rural locations:
- 3.6.4 "Hackney carriage and private hire vehicles... are used by all social groups and play an important part in local public transport, providing a highly flexible form of transport that can play an increasingly important role improving accessibility" (NCC, 2010:2).
- 3.6.5 Within the Plan Area designated taxi ranks are suitably located within accessible and busy areas, notably by Morpeth Train and Bus Station and along Bridge Street by the Market; detailed

information regarding the location of taxi ranks was unavailable. Many taxis do not operate from specific ranks however, instead on a customer basis from the desired locations.

## 4.0 Energy

### 4.1 Electricity Provision

- 4.1.1 All communities located within the Plan Area are connected to mains electricity. Northern Power Grid is responsible for the delivery of power across the majority of the North East, Northumberland and the Plan Area. Northern Power takes electrical power from suppliers and distributes it to residential and commercial properties. Power distribution within rural communities is necessary for people's security, safety and comfort. It is recognised that rural communities are some of the most vulnerable in terms of securing electrical generation due to maintenance issues of equipment and power cuts during periods of bad weather. It is the accessibility of rural locations, akin to the Plan Area, which often makes the task harder and longer for engineers to fix and/or replace the necessary infrastructure. Northern Power Grid state they have a:
- 4.1.2 "...critical role to play in maintaining a reliable electricity supply to our 3.8 million customers throughout the year... taking responsibilities within our communities seriously and have five customer promises that govern our activities. They are; putting safety first, respecting you, your time and your property, doing a really good job, being there when you need us and caring for our local environment." (Northern Power Grid, 2012)
- 4.1.3 Furthermore, in the hope of delivering reliable energy supply to Northumberland, Northern Power conducts annual long-term development statements which assist existing and future users of Northern Power Grid's systems in assessing new opportunities available to customers (Northern Power Grid, 2012)
- 4.1.4 Northumberland Renewable, Low Carbon Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency Study (January 2011) shows the energy distribution grid across Northumberland. From the east of Morpeth and running north of Pegswood, two 66kV capacity overhead lines serve the whole Plan Area. Further smaller overhead lines distribute energy to smaller communities within the Plan Area.

### 4.2 Gas Provision

- 4.2.1 Morpeth, Mitford, Hebscott, Hebron and Pegswood are connected to mains gas. However, limited supply of gas to rural and isolated communities/houses restricts individual's choice of energy/fuel use, therefore restricting the implementation energy saving technology such as combi-boilers and can in turn a contributing factor towards fuel poverty.

- 4.2.2 The installation, maintenance and repairs of gas distribution across the entire North of England including the Plan Area is under the responsibility of Northern Gas Networks. Northern Gas Networks state:
- 4.2.3 "... [We] invest millions of pounds each year in the pipeline network to keep it in prime working condition. ...When we have to replace or repair parts of our infrastructure it causes some inconvenience to local people. We work closely with local authorities and other utility providers to keep that inconvenience to the minimum level and return the streets and pathways to their normal condition as quickly as possible." (Northern Gas Network, 2012)
- 4.2.4 Gas is recognised as an increasingly important fuel to both residents and business for heating and operation. It is also recognised as a cleaner more efficient fuel which will play an important role in tackling climate change issues, principally through the installation of gas boilers to new and old residential homes throughout the Plan Area.

### **4.3 Renewable Energy**

- 4.3.1 No targets are required at local level for the provision of renewable energy; however the UK Renewable Energy Strategy seeks 15% of all energy to be derived from renewable sources by 2020. There are currently no wind turbines identified within the Plan Area, although several are operating close by in neighbouring settlements Ashington and Cramlington. Northumberland County Council Renewable, Low Carbon Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency Study (Entec 2011) indicates the majority of the Plan Area is considered to be technically and environmentally least suitable for the placement of wind turbines. This however does not rule out their construction altogether, especially in terms of micro generation for individual properties or small communities. Feedback from the Neighbourhood Consultation Events held around the Plan Area expressed great concern from locals regarding the impact of wind turbines. Many comments showed considerable concern with regards to their detrimental impact upon the surrounding landscape.
- 4.3.2 Further renewable energy generation opportunities which currently do not exist include renewable heat sources and local distribution. These include biomass boilers and decentralised energy networks for large individual buildings or whole communities. The table below adapted from the Northumberland County Council Renewable, Low Carbon Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency Study (Entec 2011) indicates an appraisal of heat demand and the potential for communal heating networks for selected Northumberland settlements. Discussion of the potential implementation of renewable heat networks will be discussed in further detail later within this audit.

Settlement	Potential
<b>Morpeth</b>	<p data-bbox="485 284 616 315">Summary</p> <p data-bbox="485 333 1469 712">Demand of ~25,000MW per year with further demand expected from the St George’s Hospital Growth Area. Development of the Growth Area will require consideration of a communal heating network at the outset (to meet higher national standards introduced over the next 5 years), which could be extended where the opportunities exist to do so. In addition, although there are other opportunities for a communal heating network (e.g. associated with the town centre), stand-alone CHP/biomass may be more suited in the short term.</p> <p data-bbox="485 786 911 817">Further detail - key areas &amp; sites</p> <p data-bbox="485 835 1469 1272">A small communal heating network could be centred on the council offices to the south of the town. Developing a heating network in the town centre may be possible but is likely to be challenging due to the absence of a significant anchor load and the small size of most buildings (shops and other small businesses); this may mean a network is expensive and difficult to implement commercially. Any network in the town centre is likely to be focused around the main shopping area, library etc. The other main site is Northgate hospital to the north of the town which may offer an opportunity for a standalone gas CHP or biomass heating system.</p>

Table 5: Morpeth Decentralised Energy Network Potential

4.3.3 The table indicates Morpeth as having good potential for the installation of communal heat networks around the town centre and to the south of Morpeth located at the County Hall. The installation of decentralised energy networks secures renewable heat energy for a collection of buildings and financial savings over the future years. Furthermore it will help reduce the Plan Area’s carbon emissions and energy demands. Energy supply was raised as a concern by the public at the Neighbourhood Open Event held in Mitford. Locals wanted to consider local initiatives in energy supply for the Plans communities through opportunities within heating systems via ground or air sourced heat pumps and electrical generation from photovoltaic cells or small wind turbines.

## 5.0 Sewerage Capacity and Drainage

- 5.1.1 The responsibility for highways drainage is under Northumberland County Council, while Northumbrian Water is responsible for the maintenance of public sewers:
- 5.1.2 'Drains are the term given to a pipe that carries waste and water away from houses. When one drain connects to another it becomes a sewer. Gullies or grids are the system in place to remove water from highways. Northumberland County Council maintains the road gully drainage system... The public sewer system is maintained by Northumbrian Water' (NCC, 2012b)
- 5.1.3 Northumbrian Water Limited serves the Plan Area and the North East of England, providing water treatment and sewerage services to approximately 2.7 million people, investing millions of funds annually into its extensive waste water and pipe network. Northumbrian Water note five values which they operate by, these include: Customer focus, results driven, ethical, creative and working as once together (Northumbrian Water Limited, 2012a).
- 5.1.4 The water company operates within a five year rolling investment plan. Northumbrian Waters most recent five year plan cycle began in 2010/11. It is important that the neighbourhood plans proposed development is carefully considered against the planned investment by Northumbrian Water. The company's five year investment plans, regulated by OFWAT, is important as all future investment and maintenance projects are funded by customers. The charge is directly linked to the companies planned investment. At present Northumbrian Water state; 'Water and sewerage services in the North East cost an average householder 91 pence per day' (Northumbrian Water Limited, 2012b).

### 5.2 Sewerage Capacity

- 5.2.1 Northumberland County Council's Outline Water Cycle Study (2012) states Morpeth's waste water treatment works to the south 'currently has no headroom to serve new development'. In light of this, it is further stated that Northumbrian Water has 'confirmed there is a fully developed solution to expand capacity in January 2012 and will take up to eighteen months to complete construction' (URS, 2012:5).
- 5.2.2 Several areas of south Morpeth have had reported sewer flooding incidents, which according to the Outline Water Cycle Study notes existing infrastructure problematic without further upgrades being installed. Northumbrian Water has begun a £1 million flood defence project which includes significant sewerage upgrades to the network. This comprises of 120 metres of new piping, adjacent to the south of the river around Bennett's Walk and Alexandra Road in Morpeth. This will

include a combined sewer overflow and sewerage pumping station, discharging diluted waste water into the watercourse during periods of excessive rain thereby protecting surrounding buildings and land from flooding. The work began on 06 September 2012 and is expected to be completed in spring 2013 (Northumbrian Water, 2012b).

- 5.2.3 The Outline Water Cycle Study identifies that the River Wansbeck is likely to be impacted by future development from the discharge of diluted waste water from treatment works, scoring a 'poor' status, as in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. This means the current treatment works does not have the ability to effectively treat future waste water levels safely before discharging into the river. The study further states Morpeth's waste water treatment works has 'capacity to accommodate the potential new development but the wastewater network is unlikely to have the capacity and therefore may need upgrading.
- 5.2.4 The report identifies no known data or capacity issues for the smaller settlements located around Morpeth. This is in part due to the smallness of these settlements; Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford. However, following discussions with Parish Councillors it is acknowledged that at present, there is no or little waste water capacity for future development.
- 5.2.5 The Waste Water Network Summary (Outline Water Cycle Study) has provided a comprehensive assessment (as seen below) of Morpeth's waste water network and its constraints on proposed future development figures. The study uses two scenarios to predict future development growth up to 2031 and its effects on sewerage capacity. Using figures from the 'City Commuter Region SHMA' estimates; under Scenario 1 it is proposed that 858 dwellings are developed in Morpeth and increase to 1,030 dwellings under Scenario 2. In addition, 25.0ha of employment land are also proposed for Morpeth over the plan period of the Northumberland LDF. The report notes that development located on the periphery of Morpeth town, rather than other parts of the former Castle Morpeth area, are very unlikely to drain to the Morpeth Waste water Treatment Works. The current Northumbrian Water project to expand capacity of the waste water works allows for an additional 700 homes initially. Further design allows for additional capacity to be installed at the appropriate time in future and with updated figures.

*Development within Morpeth will drain to Morpeth WwTW [waste water treatment works] which is situated to the east of Morpeth at Parish Haugh. Morpeth WwTW discharges treated effluent into the River Wansbeck*

*East of Morpeth - Development to the east and north of Morpeth would be most favourable due to the proximity of Morpeth WwTW. Location connections to the sewer network will be required.*

*North of Morpeth - Development to the east and north of Morpeth would be most favourable due to the proximity of Morpeth WwTW. Location connections to the sewer network will be required.*

*South of Morpeth - Development to the south and west of Morpeth would be more reliant on existing sewer networks and further discussions with NWL and a more detailed assessment of capacity are recommended due to the proposed new development (residential and employment) figures for Morpeth.*

*West of Morpeth - Development to the south and west of Morpeth would be more reliant on existing sewer networks and further discussions with NWL and a more detailed assessment of capacity are recommended due to the proposed new development (residential and employment) figures for Morpeth.” (URS, 2012:96)*

- 5.2.6 The study concludes that further information would be needed to fully assess capacity levels in Morpeth. However, as stated above parts of east and west Morpeth are ‘currently at risk of sewer flooding indicating that there may be limited capacity in the network in the south-east/west areas of Morpeth’ (URS, 2012:96) Future development for Morpeth would be preferable towards the north, which has extra capacity, thereby avoiding future sewerage overflows or flooding from occurring again.
- 5.2.7 Due to the small scale of the remaining settlements within the Plan Area, comprehensive analysis of current sewerage capacity is limited due to insufficient data. However the following discussions with Pegswood Parish Council Members have concluded the following. Pegswood is recognised as being at full capacity. Discussions with the Pegswood Parish Councillors have confirmed that before additional housing within the village is developed, upgrades to the existing sewerage network and pumping station, adjacent to the allotments, will need to be implemented. This confirms Northumbrian Water’s comments, stating the flow measurement data suggests that Pegswood WwTW’s has little or no headroom available. Northumbrian Water further state additional monitoring is being carried out to confirm the current situation. From further discussions with Parish Councillors from Hepscoth and the Consultation Event, issues were raised that Hepscoth’s sewerage capacity is at a critical point.

### **5.3 Drainage Capacity**

- 5.3.1 The Environment Agency state; ‘flooding from surface water happens when the local drainage system cannot cope with the rainfall. It is extremely difficult to predict precisely where surface

water flooding will happen as it is dependent on ground levels, rainfall, and the local drainage network' (Environment Agency, 2012). Surface water runoff and the consequences of flooding is common within many parts of the Plan Area, none more so than within Morpeth with a historical past. However, it is an increasing problem within the smaller communities. Drainage capacity during periods of excessive rainfall is reaching full, with many failing. This is a combination of factors, the increased development of area and impermeable surfaces coupled with aged drainage networks and inadequate new systems.

- 5.3.2 The Outline Water Cycle Study states Morpeth is susceptible to surface water flooding (URS, 2012:123). Furthermore the study identifies that the management of surface water runoff for the area is inadequate and poorly maintained, stating: "The majority of the study area [Northumberland including the Plan Area] is not suitable for infiltration based SuDS (with the exception of small isolated areas) and will therefore be reliant on surface attenuation and runoff restriction, which will require sites to make land provision for this mitigation" (URS, 2012:8).
- 5.3.3 The report unfortunately does not mention any smaller settlements due to their limited population and data available. However further discussions with Pegswood Councillors highlighted severe issues with drainage and surface water flooding within the village. Areas of particular concern and frequently impacted include Butterwell Drive, Bentinck Crescent and Bamburgh Drive.

## 6.0 Telecommunications

6.1.1 The “iNorthumberland: State Aid Public Consultation” (2012e) document states, “The geographical size of Northumberland and its poor connectivity (transport, broadband and mobile phone signal quality) significantly impacts on the costs of service delivery”. The economic state of the country and the trends in declining agricultural industry dictate the importance for the Plan Area to have good telecommunication connectivity. This is of further importance for new enterprises that are located within the Plan Areas most isolated communities.

### 6.2 Broadband and Wireless Internet

6.2.1 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS, 2010) sets the standard and aim that 66% of premises should have access to superfast broadband across the UK by 2015. Northumberland County Council aims to “ensure that 90% of all target premises will have access to a superfast broadband service of at least 25Mbits by 2015, then 95% by 2018 and finally 100% by 2020” (NCC, n.d.)

6.2.2 Rural areas are often less well provided for than settlements such as Morpeth and to an extent Pegswood. From speaking directly to a resident of Morpeth, the provision even there is less than satisfactory. From the Neighbourhood Plan Launch Meeting feedback it is clear that the issue of broadband and wireless internet is an element of infrastructure in the Plan Area that needs to be improved, with many respondents dissatisfied with the current level of provision. Morpeth is largely covered by BT’s superfast commercial roll out, however Mitford and Hebron are not covered by this commercial area. The Plan Area currently operates on an average broadband speed of 3-6 mbs, sufficiently below that of the targets set out by the Local Broadband Plan. With the Local Broadband Plan (NCC, n.d.) in place Northumberland County Council are in discussions with BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK) to achieve the standards set out by the DCMS. Hebron only has broadband speeds of 0.5mbs and is the worst in the Plan Area.

### 6.3 Mobile Phone Networks

6.3.1 It is indicated by Mobilecoverage.net (2011) that the five main settlements in the Plan Area are covered by the following networks to the following provision:

	<b>Orange/ T-mobile</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Vodaphone</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>Morpeth</b>	Excellent – Very Good	Indoor and Outdoor Coverage	Good Indoors	Good Indoors & Outdoors
<b>Mitford</b>	Low – Good	Outdoor Coverage, Indoor Coverage Limited	Mixture Good Indoors & Outdoor Only, Including some areas of Limited Service	Mixture of Good Indoors & Outdoors and Good Outdoors only
<b>Hepscott</b>	Excellent	Outdoor Coverage, Indoor Coverage Limited	Mixture Good Indoors & Outdoor Only	Good Indoors & Outdoors
<b>Hebron</b>	Excellent – Very Good	Indoor and Outdoor Coverage	Mixture Good Indoors & Outdoor Only	Good Indoors & Outdoors
<b>Pegswood</b>	Excellent – Very Good	Indoor and Outdoor Coverage	Good Indoors	Good Indoors & Outdoors

Table 6: Mobile Phone Coverage

6.3.2 The above table shows that the provision of mobile phone networks is good or satisfactory in most cases aside from Mitford which showed poorer access to reasonable mobile phone signal compared to the others; this is most likely to do with the topography of the location of the Mitford settlement situated within a valley.

#### 6.4 Public Phones

6.4.1 The audit identified that Mitford, Pegswood settlements both have public phone boxes. Hebron has a public phone box located at Northgate Hospital. Morpeth has public phones distributed throughout the town centre, such as the Market Place opposite the Town Hall.

6.4.2 This audit was unable to identify any public phone standards. Public phones can be essential in the event of an accident in rural locations. If the reduction of public phones is planned for, then their removal should be phased in a way that leaves those settlements with worse mobile phone coverage, with public phones, until the provision better mobile coverage is secured.

## 7.0 Education

7.1.1 Northumberland County Education operates on a three tier system. This includes First Schools (ages 4-8); Middle Schools (ages 9-13); and High Schools (ages 13-18). The Plan Area is served currently by 14 schools across the tier system. Each of the schools has been analysed in terms of their current register; their maximum capacities; their individual ratings from the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted); and if they provide any special services. These results have been summarised in table format in Appendix 3.

### 7.2 Morpeth

7.2.1 Most of the schools within the plan area fall within Morpeth. This includes 6 First Schools; 2 Middle Schools; a High School; and an all age school for children with moderate learning difficulties.

#### ***First Schools***

7.2.2 Morpeth has 5 first schools: Morpeth First School, Morpeth Stobhillgate First School, Abbeyfields First School, Morpeth All Saints Church of England First School, and St Roberts Roman Catholic School. The standard of education in the First Schools is generally high. All of the schools have an Ofsted rating of "good" or better in their most recent Inspection Reports. All of the schools provide facilities for children with learning difficulties. 2 of the schools are operated by local churches; Morpeth All Saints Church of England First School and St Robert's Roman Catholic First School.

7.2.3 In addition to the Ofsted ratings of the schools' the Department for Education (DfE) provides considerable data on the number of students in the individual schools and provides a pupil:teacher ratio which provides an indicator of pressure on the number of places available in the schools. Clause 1 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 placed a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools to restrict class sizes to 30 in Key Stage One classes from September 2002. Based on the pupil:teacher ratios all of the schools in the Plan Area are comfortable under this maximum with the largest ratio being found at Morpeth First School with a ratio of 25.7:1 (DfE, 2011).

7.2.4 Morpeth First School is the most popular of the First School in the Plan Area receiving 76 first preference applications places in 2011, Morpeth Stobhillgate First School was also oversubscribed receiving 38 first preference applications for 30 places (NCC, 2011). Other schools in the plan area are undersubscribed; Abbeyfields only received 53 first preference

applications for 60 places; Morpeth All Saints CoE First School received 26 first preference applications for 45 places; and St Roberts RC First School 24 first preference applications for 30 places.

- 7.2.5 In terms of achievement tables there are no tables provided by the DfE for Key Stage 1 progression. Despite this lack of information, using the information from the individual Ofsted reports of the schools all of the schools appear to be performing well in students progressing at the expected rates.
- 7.2.6 All of the First Schools in the Plan area provide and pre and after school services from times varying from 7:30 am till 6pm.

### ***Middle Schools***

- 7.2.7 Morpeth has 2 Middle Schools, Morpeth Newminster Middle School and Morpeth Chantry Middle School. The standard of education in the Middle Schools is moderately high. Both of the Middle Schools have an Ofsted rating of “good” in their most recent Inspection reports. Both schools have converted to academies under the 2010 Academies Act.
- 7.2.8 As with the First Schools in the region the DfE provided significant information on the number of students in the individual schools. In addition to this it has also provided important numerical data in terms of the schools performance in Key Stage 2 providing numbers of students making expected progress in English and mathematics as well as numbers of students performing above average and receiving attaining level 4 or level 5 in these subjects at Key Stage 2.
- 7.2.9 Morpeth Chantry is not in as high demand as Morpeth Newminster. Morpeth Chantry had 92 first choice applications for a possible 128 places in 2011, by comparison Morpeth Newminster had 149 applications for the same number of places (NCC, 2012). As a result Morpeth Newminster was slightly oversubscribed taking on 130 pupils leaving several places available at Morpeth Chantry who took on 109 pupils in 2011 (NCC, 2012).
- 7.2.10 Both of the Middle Schools perform well in their individual Department for Education performance tables for Key Stage 2. Morpeth Chantry has 89% of its pupils attaining level 4 or higher in both English and mathematics, with 90% of pupils making expected progress in mathematics above a national average of 84% and 78% making expected progress in English which is below the national average of 87% (DfE, 2011). Morpeth Newminster has 87% of its pupils attaining level 4 or higher in both English and mathematics, with 84% making expected progress in mathematics

which is in line with the national average and 80% making expected progress in English below the national average (DfE, 2011).

7.2.11 Morpeth Chantry has a greater catchment area accepting pupils from several schools outside of the plan area, these include, Cambo, Longhorsley, and Stannington (DfE, 2012).

7.2.12 Both Middle Schools provide breakfast club services from 8:15 am.

### ***High Schools/Further Education***

7.2.13 Morpeth is served by 1 high school, The King Edward VI School. The school has an Ofsted rating of “outstanding” in its most recent Inspection report. The school also specialises in Art and Technology. It has also converted to an academy under the 2010 Academies Act.

7.2.14 Additionally The King Edward VI School provides sixth form facilities enabling further education. The sixth form facilities at the school received an Ofsted rating of “good” in its most recent Inspection report.

7.2.15 The Department for Education provides information on total pupil numbers and Key Stage 4 and 5 results giving numerical data on attainment as well as students making expected progress in the core subjects. Additionally there is information on the number of students who take the English Baccalaureate and their attainment.

7.2.16 The King Edward VI School is a very large school accommodating over 1400 students. Demand for places are high with 369 first preference applications in 2011 for 320 year 9 places (NCC, 2012). Due to successful appeals for places at the school, the school was oversubscribed in 2011 and accepted 332 year 9 places students (NCC, 2012).



Figure 4: King Edward VI School (Kevi, 2012)

- 7.2.17 The King Edward VI School performs very well in Key Stage 4, with 87% of its pupils receiving 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C grade, nationally only 58.2% of students achieved this as stated in the DfE First Statistical release for GCSE or equivalent attainment (2011), 98% receiving 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-G grade (DfE, 2011). 86% of its pupils are making expected progress in English and 77% are making expected progress in mathematics (DfE, 2011). 24% of the Key Stage 4 pupils opted to do the English Baccalaureate.
- 7.2.18 The DfE First Statistical Release of Level 2 and 3 attainment by Young People stating 37.2% of young people up to the age of 19 received level 3 or similar qualification in 2011. By this standard King Edward VI School performs very highly at Key Stage 5. 95% of the pupils attained 3 A levels and 100% achieved 2 A Levels (DfE, 2011).

### ***Specialist Education***

- 7.2.19 Morpeth has 1 school with facilities for specialist education. The Collingwood School and Media Arts College is an all age school for children with moderate learning difficulties. The school partners with The King Edward VI School to provide education up to the age of 19. The school has an Ofsted rating of “outstanding” in its most recent Inspection report.

## **7.3 Pegswood**

- 7.3.1 Pegswood is served by its own First School, however it falls within the catchment area of Bothal Middle School and Ashington High School and Sports College, which despite not falling in the plan area has been included in this report for relevance.

### ***First Schools***

- 7.3.2 Pegswood First School has an Ofsted rating of “good” in its most recent Inspection report.
- 7.3.3 In addition to the Ofsted ratings of the schools’ the Department for Education (DfE) provides considerable data on the number of students in the individual schools and provides a pupil:teacher ratio which provides an indicator of pressure on the number of places available in the schools. Clause 1 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 placed a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools to restrict class sizes to 30 in Key Stage One classes from September 2002.
- 7.3.4 Pegswood First School is undersubscribed it received 27 first preference applications for 40 possible places in 2011.

- 7.3.5 In terms of achievement tables there are no tables provided by the DfE for Key Stage 1 progression. Despite this lack of information, using the information from the individual Ofsted reports of the schools all of the schools appear to be performing well in students progressing at the expected rates.
- 7.3.6 Pegswood First School provides a breakfast club from 8 am and after school services till 4 pm.

### ***Middle Schools***

- 7.3.7 Pegswood is served by Bothal Middle School which has an Ofsted rating of “good” in its most recent Inspection report. The school provides good facilities for students with special needs to maintain development.
- 7.3.8 As with the First Schools in the region the Department for Education provided significant information on the number of students in the individual schools. In addition to this it has also provided important numerical data in terms of the schools performance in Key Stage 2 providing numbers of students making expected progress in English and mathematics as well as numbers of students performing above average and receiving attaining level 4 or level 5 in these subjects at Key Stage 2.
- 7.3.9 Bothal Middle School is below average in its individual performance table for Key Stage 2. 65% of Bothal pupils attained level 4 or better in both English and mathematics, 80% of the pupils are making the expected progress in mathematics below an national average of 84% and 69% are making the expected progress in English below the national score of 87% (DfE, 2012)
- 7.3.10 Bothal Middle School is undersubscribed receiving 105 first preferences applications for 150 places in 2011 (NCC, 2012).

### ***High Schools/Further Education***

- 7.3.11 Pegswood falls within the catchment area of Ashington High School and Sports College. The School has an Ofsted rating of “good” in its most recent Inspection report. The school provides above average support for students with special learning needs.
- 7.3.12 Additionally Ashington High School and Sports College provides sixth form facilities enabling further education. These facilities have been awarded an Ofsted rating of “good” in its most recent Inspection report.

- 7.3.13 The Department for Education provides information on total pupil numbers and information on Key Stage 4 and 5 results giving numerical data on attainment as well as students making expected progress in the core subjects. Additionally there is information on the number of students who take the English Baccalaureate and their attainment.
- 7.3.14 Ashington High School and Sports College performs well in Key Stage 4, with 79% of its pupils receiving 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-C grade, nationally only 58.2% of students achieved this as stated in the DfE First Statistical release for GCSE or equivalent attainment (2011), and 88% are receiving 5 or more GCSEs at A\*-G grade (DfE, 2011). 48% of its pupils are making expected progress in English and 53% are making expected progress in mathematics (DfE, 2011). 9% of the Key Stage 4 pupils opted to do the English Baccalaureate.
- 7.3.15 The DfE First Statistical Release of Level 2 and 3 attainment by Young People stating 37.2% of young people up to the age of 19 received level 3 or similar qualification in 2011 (DfE, 2012). Using this as a standard, Ashington High School and Sports College performs very highly at Key Stage 5. 79% of the pupils attained 3 A levels and 96% achieved 2 A Levels with all students leaving with at least one qualification (DfE, 2011).
- 7.3.16 Ashington High School and Sports College is large school serving over 1000 pupils. In 2011 it was undersubscribed receiving 236 first preference applications for a possible 270 year 9 places.

## **7.4 Hebron**

- 7.4.1 Hebron is in the catchment area of Tritlington Church of England First School, for Middle Schools and High Schools it falls within the catchment area of Morpeth Schools.

### ***First Schools***

- 7.4.2 Tritlington Church of England First School has an Ofsted rating of “good” on its most recent Inspection report. The school provides good support for students with special educational needs and those with disabilities.
- 7.4.3 In addition to the Ofsted ratings of the schools’ the Department for Education (DfE) provides considerable data on the number of students in the individual schools and provides a pupil:teacher ratio which provides an indicator of pressure on the number of places available in the schools. Clause 1 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 placed a duty on Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and schools to restrict class sizes to 30 in Key Stage One classes from September 2002. Using pupil:teacher ratios as a guide for class size Tritlington CoE First School is well under this number with a ratio of 16.4:1.

- 7.4.4 In 2011 Tritlington CoE First School was undersubscribed, receiving 7 first preference applications for 12 places. Tritlington CoE First School has significantly smaller numbers than the other schools in this report. This can be accounted to its status as a village school, and therefore is expected to be smaller than the other schools.
- 7.4.5 In terms of achievement tables there are no tables provided by the DfE for Key Stage 1 progression. Despite this lack of information, using the information from the individual Ofsted reports of the schools all of the schools appear to be performing well in students progressing at the expected rates.

### ***Middle Schools***

- 7.4.6 Hebron is served by Morpeth Chantry School.

### ***High Schools/Further Education***

- 7.4.7 Hebron is served by The King Edward VI School.

## **7.5 Mitford and Hepscoth**

- 7.5.1 Mitford and Hepscoth having no schools of their own, fall within the catchment area of the Morpeth Schools.

### ***First Schools***

- 7.5.2 Morpeth All Saints First School is the First School for Mitford and Hepscoth.

### ***Middle Schools***

- 7.5.3 Morpeth Chantry School is the Middle School for Mitford and Hepscoth.

### ***High Schools/Further Education***

- 7.5.4 The King Edward VI School serves Mitford and Hepscoth.

## **7.6 Out of Plan Area Further and Higher Education**

### ***Newcastle College***

- 7.6.1 Newcastle College is large further and higher education College in Newcastle with over 25,000 students. The college offers a wide range of further and higher education options; a new sixth form college is due to open in 2013, additionally a range of evening, part time and day time

courses are offered for adult learners, the college offers university awarded Foundation, Honours and Post-graduate degrees. The college has several specialist areas of education; a Renewable Energies Academy; Newcastle Aviation Academy; Performance Academy for music, media and performing arts; construction skills centres; centre for business and enterprise; centre for health and care – including hospital simulation unit; motor vehicle workshops; and a centre for applied science and technology.

- 7.6.2 Newcastle College has received outstanding in its two most recent Ofsted reports. Newcastle College is a Beacon Status college – one of 46 in the country to reach this status ([excellencegateway.org.uk](http://excellencegateway.org.uk)). Newcastle College also has an outstanding Quality Assurance Agency report – most recently done in 2009. The college has ranked highly in DfE tables for 16-18 education for 3 consecutive years.

### ***Northumberland College Ashington***

- 7.6.3 Northumberland College is the only general further education (GFE) college in the county. It has a main site in Ashington and additional sites at Kirkley Hall, Alnwick, Blyth and Berwick-upon-Tweed. Northumberland College is quite large having a total of 7,404 learners. The learners are spread across several different levels with 587 pupils of GCSE age; 1,347 pupils in further education or 16-18 year olds; there are 3,621 adult learner with vast majority being part-time; there is also an employer provision with 1,626 learners, 515 of which are apprentices (Ofsted, 2010).
- 7.6.4 Northumberland College has several partnerships and provides services on behalf of these providers; University of Sunderland (higher education); Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (apprenticeships); Retail Motor Industry Training Limited (apprenticeships); TDR Training Limited (apprenticeships and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 for students aged 14 to 16); JTL (apprenticeships); North East Chamber of Commerce (Training) (advanced apprenticeships); VT Training PLC (apprenticeships); South Tyneside Council (adult and community learning, apprenticeships); Tyne North Training Limited (apprenticeships); Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council (apprenticeships) (Ofsted, 2010).
- 7.6.5 Ofsted has rated Northumberland College as satisfactory with the learners making the progress expected of them. Despite this Ofsted has identified a number of areas in which the college could improve, in order to meet its aim to provide exceptional service.

### ***Northumbria University***

7.6.6 Northumbria University is the largest university in the North-east with around 32,000 students. A former polytechnic it offers a large range of vocational courses. The University offers over 200 undergraduate programmes and over 300 post graduate programmes. The University received ratings of excellent in their most recent QAA reports.

### ***Newcastle University***

7.6.7 Newcastle University is a highly rated research university located in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne. It is ranked in the top 20 for the UK by the Sunday Times league table and in the top 200 in the world by both the Times Higher Education and QS rankings. It was also ranked in the top ten of the National Student Survey in 2012.

7.6.8 Newcastle University is a member of the Russell Group, an association of the 20 leading research institutes in the UK. The university offers a large range of programmes at both undergraduate and post-graduate level. There are 193 undergraduate programmes and over 300 post graduate programmes available at the university.



Newcastle University (Chronicle, 2012)

### ***University of Sunderland***

7.6.9 The University of Sunderland is the newest of the universities in the North-east. It is well regarded as a new university having been nominated for university of the year in the Times Higher Education awards 2012.

## 8.0 Healthcare

### 8.1 General Practitioners

- 8.1.1 The Plan Area is served by 3 General Practice Surgeries who primarily operate out of Morpeth; Greystroke Surgery, Gas house Lane surgery and Wellway Medical Group. Wellway Medical Group has an additional surgery in Pegswood.
- 8.1.2 Wellway Medical Group is the largest of the of the practices with 16 General Practitioners (GPs) operating across the practice which also serves Ashington, Bedlington, and Choppington. The practice is quite highly regarded scoring 7.5 out of 10 in a patient survey for overall care (nhs.co.uk). The practice provides a number of services including; babies/child health development checks; carers; child immunisations; chiropody; community psychiatric nurse; continence; family planning; immunisations; midwifery; minor surgery; and pregnancy care. The Practice takes on additional appointments for pre booked routine appointments on Tuesdays. The Pegswood practice runs different hours, closing for Tuesday afternoons, and closing at 5 o'clock on most afternoons except Wednesdays where hours extend until 6 o'clock.
- 8.1.3 The Greystroke Surgery is the second largest practice in the Plan Area with 5 partners and one salaried GP as well as 2 registrars working from the practice. The practice scored well with 8.1 out of 10 in the patient survey for overall care (nhs.co.uk). Practice services include; maternity care; child care clinics; immunisations; minor surgery/cryotherapy; health promotion; family planning; chiropody; and smoking cessation. The surgery also has special clinics for particular health issues including; diabetic care; asthma care; dietary advice; ischaemic heart disease; epilepsy; hypertension monitoring; and lithium monitoring. The practice offers a limited number of extended hours on Tuesday evenings for pre booked appointments. The practice will move to the new Integrated Health Care Clinic in the spring of 2013.
- 8.1.4 The Gas House Lane Surgery is the smallest of the practices in the Plan Area with only 3 doctors. However it scored the highest the in its patient survey for overall care with 8.5 out of 10. Practice services include; family planning; antenatal care; travel vaccinations; influenza/pneumococcal vaccinations; asthma care; chronic disease clinics; cervical cytology screenings; minor surgery; and private examination (this is beyond the remit of the NHS and a fee is applied). The Gas House lane Surgery has been operating out the Morpeth Cottage Hospital since the 2008 flood and will move into the new Integrated Health Centre in the spring of 2013.

## **8.2 Hospitals**

- 8.2.1 The Wansbeck Hospital in Ashington while not in the Plan Area is the major hospital for the region. Situated 5.64 miles away from Morpeth, the Hospital provides all the major hospital services for the Plan Area. Hospital services include; accidents and emergencies; breast surgery; children's and adolescent surgery; cardiology services; diabetic medicine services; gastroenterology and hepatology services; gynaecology services; geriatric services; general surgery; haematology services; minor injuries unit; neurology services; orthopaedic services; oral maxilla-facial services; palliative medicine; plastic surgery; podiatry; rheumatology; sleep medicine; and urology. The hospital scored well in both the patient survey for overall care with 8.98/10 and its survey for cleanliness with 9.59 out of 10.
- 8.2.2 The Northgate Hospital is a smaller hospital located in Morpeth, it provides several services including; rehabilitation and day services; mental health; physical treatment; palliative care; elderly care; autism services; and Northumberland Head Injury Services. The hospital also has a medium and low risk security wing on its grounds ([ntw.nhs.uk](http://ntw.nhs.uk)).
- 8.2.3 St George's Park is a purpose built mental hospital situated in Morpeth. Relatively new having opened in 2006, St George's Park provides a full range of mental health services. Hospital services include; acute adult admission/treatment; mother and baby services; rehabilitation; behavioural development; slow stream rehabilitation; continuing treatment and care; and a geriatric assessment/treatment/day hospital ([ntw.nhs.uk](http://ntw.nhs.uk)).
- 8.2.4 In 2011 plans were approved for a specialist Accident and Emergency Hospital in near Cramlington just off the A19. It is expected to be among the first in the UK to have specialist A&E consultants on site 24-hours a day, seven days a week. The move is part of plans to downsize A&E facilities at Northumberland and North Tyneside hospitals by creating one specialist centre (BBC UK, 2011).
- 8.2.5 The Royal Victoria Infirmary is a large hospital in Newcastle upon Tyne. The hospital serves Newcastle upon Tyne and the North East and provides a large number of services with over 30 departments. The RVI is also the site of the Great Children's Hospital which provides a great number of services in paediatric care ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)).

## **8.3 Integrated Health Centre**

- 8.3.1 The New Health Centre will replace Morpeth Cottage Hospital when it opens in 2013. The centre with house 2 of the General Practice surgeries when opened – the Greystroke Surgery and the

Gas House Lane Surgery. The centre will provide diagnostic services (x-rays, ultrasound scans, MRI and other tests), outpatient clinics and a 12 bay renal dialysis unit (NCT – NHS 2009). Unlike the Morpeth Cottage Hospital, the Health Centre will not provide beds, it is anticipated these will be leased in local private sector care homes.

#### **8.4 Retirement and Care Homes**

- 8.4.1 The Plan Area is home to a number of retirement and care homes. The majority of these are privately run by different agencies and provide different services and specialist care facilities.
- 8.4.2 Howard Castle is operated by the European Care Group and is a registered for old age. It houses 36 residents some of which have access to ensuite facilities within their rooms (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.3 Northlands Nursing Home is operated by the Autumncare Group Ltd and is a registered care facility for old age and physical disability. It houses 35 residents who all have access to ensuite facilities within their rooms (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.4 The Willows is a smaller facility operated by the NHS and is a registered care facility for medical health concerns. It houses 12 residents and provides them with day care and physiotherapy (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.5 67 Newgate is the smallest facility in the Plan Area housing just 3 residents. It is operated by the NHS and is a registered care facility for those with learning difficulties (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.6 Terravis Park is located in Hepscoth and is operated by Kay Care. It has the capacity for 42 residents and is a registered care facility for dementia and old age. It is also a specialist facility for Alzheimer's disease (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.7 East Riding Care Home is a larger facility operated by Four Season Health Care, it has the capacity for 67 residents with 53 single rooms and 7 shared rooms. It is a registered care facility for a number of services; dementia, learning disabilities, mental health care, non-medical intervention, old age, physical disability, sensory impairment, and substance abuse. It also specialises in care for alcohol dependence, Alzheimer's disease, bi-polar/manic depression, hearing impairment, orthopaedic services, Parkinson's disease, profound and multiple learning difficulties, schizophrenia, speech impairment, stroke and visual impairment (carehome.co.uk).
- 8.4.8 Fretton Court is operated by Helen McArdle Care and has the capacity for 46 residents. It is a registered facility for dementia and old age specialising in Alzheimer's disease (carehome.co.uk). Burnaby House in Pegswood is a NHS facility for men housing 5 residents. It is a registered care

facility for learning disabilities (carehome.co.uk). 1/5 Easter Field Court is a NHS facility for 17 residents. It is specifically aimed at young adults providing registered care for mental health problems (carehome.co.uk). Meadow and Ivy cottages is a Community Integrated Care operated facility for learning and physical disabilities (carehome.co.uk).

## 9.0 Community Services

- 9.1.1 “Plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments” (DCLG, 2012:17)
- 9.1.2 It is recognised that many of the facilities provided in the Plan Area will be held in the main settlements. With much of the area being sparsely populated it will not be economically viable for services such as Libraries, Post Offices and Community Centres, Sports facilities, Places of Worship etc. to be provided in many of the rural settlements. Despite this, in the provision of such community facilities, rural communities and their demand for such services must be taken into full consideration.
- 9.1.3 Section 3 of the NPPF (2012), Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy, highlights the need to preserve and develop community facilities, and that this practice is important for the economic productivity. This upkeep of provision and is supported by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Services (DEFRA, 2012), but state that innovative provision methods should be utilised in trying to achieve this. The Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation (NCC, 2012a) describe the provision of such facilities as crucial to the wellbeing of communities.

### 9.2 Libraries

- 9.2.1 Libraries can be very important assets to communities. Providing the opportunity to promote education and leisure in the area, it is recommended that the provision of a good library service be made available in the Plan Area.
- 9.2.2 The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) states in its Public Library Service Standards document of 2008, that 72% of households in sparse county councils should be within 2 miles of a static library. Within the plan area, there is one static library; Morpeth Library is located on Gas House Lane, Morpeth.
- 9.2.3 The Plan Area is served by 10 Mobile library routes that between them reach Mitford, Hebron, Pegswood and Hepscott. Whilst this service provides the more rural populations with a library service the Public Library Service Standards (2008) from DCMS states that this cannot be used in the pursuit of the standards set out above.

9.2.4 By road, Mitford, Hepscott and Pegswood are approximately 2.4 miles away from Morpeth Library. Hebron is further afield at approximately 3.2 miles. It is foreseen that despite this, 72% of Plan Area households are within 2 miles of Morpeth Library. Morpeth Library runs two events weekly, “Storytime and Crafts” for 0-4 years and a “Knitterati Group”. Both these groups run on a Wednesday and there are no other events booked regularly for the week. Between November 2011 and October 2012, Morpeth Library received 96,679 visitors, with October 2012 being the busiest month in that time period (please refer to Appendix 4.3). The service is evidently a popular and well used facility and considering potential population growth in the Plan Area, the provision of further services should be considered.



Figure 6: Morpeth Library (Source: Author's Own, 2012)

### 9.3 Post Offices

9.3.1 A good postal service is an important part of infrastructure in any community. It helps connect places nationally and internationally, which in an era of globalisation is important for businesses and residents alike. With slow internet provision in parts of the Plan Area the need for the physical infrastructure of a postal service is important. Post Offices in the Plan Area are:

- Pegswood Colliery, John Street, Pegswood

- Morpeth, T&G Allan, Morpeth
- Post Office Stobhill Gate, 35 Shields Road, Morpeth

9.3.2 The location of the Post Offices mentioned above means that for those living in Mitford, Hebron and Hepscott, will need to travel to use these facilities. Temporary uses should be investigated to aid those communities that are not receiving desirable standards of broadband and internet service, Mitford particularly.

9.3.3 In “Culture, knowledge and understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone” (2011) produced by Arts Council England, it states that it will seek to encourage “partnerships and innovation at a local level”. The Neighbourhood Plan has the opportunity, therefore, to set up partnerships that will help deliver a postal service in innovative ways.

#### **9.4 Sports Facilities and Leisure**

9.4.1 Sports facilities are an essential provision for the health and wellbeing of a community. They can provide a community with social interactions and thus knit a community closer together. According to Sport England (2012) 22.45% - 24.31% of people in Northumberland participate in sport for 30 minutes or more every three days. Sports pitches in the Plan Area should be maintained to a high standard supporting the health and wellbeing of the communities they are situated in.

9.4.2 Like other community services provided in the Plan Area, Morpeth has the highest density of sports facilities. According to Northumberland’s Sports Facilities Assessment table, as seen in Appendix 4.4, Hepscott, Hebron and Mitford have little to no sports facilities provided. Mitford plays host to the one Cricket pitch in the Plan Area, however there are no other sports facilities. Whilst there may not be sufficient demand for any sports facilities in these locations, with future growth, dependence on Morpeth and Pegswood facilities might not be enough.

9.4.3 The Plan Area has one leisure centre, Riverside Leisure Centre in Morpeth. The feedback from the local residents at the Neighbourhood Plan Launch meetings revealed that the facility is in need of significant investment. This was a theme not shared by Morpeth residents alone, but residents from the surrounding parishes also. With much of the Plan Area being rural in nature, there is little economic scope for the provision of further leisure centres within the Plan Area. As the only leisure centre in the Plan Area, catering for the neighbouring parishes as well, there should be emphasis on providing better facilities in this centre. It should be noted that other community leisure centres in Ashington and Bedlington may also be used by residents located

within the Plan Area. Furthermore, potential investment of £20 million into a new leisure and community facility in Ashington, this will provide a new service within reach of many residents in the Plan Area. This can ease pressure on Riverside Leisure centre.

9.4.4 Carlisle Park in Morpeth provides a number of attractions including Play areas. Carlisle Park offers:

- Ha' Hill;
- Morpeth Castle;
- Play Areas;
- Range of equipment suitable for children aged from toddler to 13;
- A small toddlers' only play area;
- A Paddling pool;
- A Skate Park;
- A bowling green;
- Tennis courts;
- A putting green;
- William Turner Herb Garden



Figure 7: Carlisle Park (Source: Author's Own, 2012)

9.4.5 Carlisle Park is a valuable asset with few other play facilities provided within the Plan Area. It further adds vital employment opportunities to locals and is an important tourist attraction. Please refer to Appendix 4.2

## 9.5 Police & Fire

9.5.1 The security of the population within the Plan Area is a very important concern. Despite this, through talking to local residents there are few problems with crime in the area. There were few or no comments highlighting policing as being a point of concern for the Neighbourhood Plan. According to Northumbria Police's website the 'Neighbourhood Concerns' for the Morpeth neighbourhood (inclusive of Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford and Pegswood) are Speeding and Anti-social behaviour. There is one Police Station in the Plan Area; it is located in Morpeth:  
Northumbria Police, Castle Square, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1YH

9.5.2 The provision of adequate Policing facilities should be supported in the Neighbourhood Plan, however at present there are no pressing provision concerns.

9.5.3 Fire services are an important provision for any area. There is one Fire Station in the Plan Area and it is located in Pegswood: Pegswood Fire Station, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 6SJ. Like policing, the provision of such services should be supported in the Neighbourhood Plan, but current provision of this service appears to be appropriate

## 9.6 Markets

9.6.1 Morpeth is described by Local Plan (2003) as a “major market town”. The town operates a market every Wednesday of the week. There are also farmers markets hosted once monthly on the first Saturday of each month. These are popular events and a large part of the character of Morpeth, the largest settlements in the Plan Area.



Figure 8: Morpeth Market Place (Source: Author's Own, 2012)

9.6.2 From correspondence with local residents and councillors, market stalls are set up between 0700 and 0830 and delivery vehicles are off the road by rush hour. The market finishes between 1530 and 1600, so falls between the school run and rush hour. Despite this no complaints regarding market caused congestion have been received. The market has had between 12-15 market traders in recent times, but with the aspiration to have 20 or more traders. Through correspondence with the Market Manager, it is identified that there is capacity for the number of

traders to grow depending on stall equipment used. If traders bring their own stalls, space will remain limited and capacity will be reduced. If traders were provided with smaller stalls, the capacity of the Morpeth market will increase and more products can be sold.

- 9.6.3 Market traders are provided with an unloading time if market operators do not arrive at their allotted time, their stall is reassigned to another market trader (NCC, 2012/2013). These strict rules imposed to traders, helps limit the markets' impact on transport infrastructure.

## **9.7 Supermarkets and Shopping**

- 9.7.1 The supermarkets in the Plan Area are located in Morpeth. Morpeth is also the chosen location for the primary shopping location in the Plan Area, with Sanderson Arcade and a number of high street brands available in the Town Centre. Morpeth attracts shoppers from rural areas in the Plan Area and from outside. The audit has identified that Morpeth is host to a large number of independent shops. The launch meeting feedback highlights a public desire to see these supported.
- 9.7.2 The Audit has not been able to identify any shopping facilities in the parishes of Hebron, Mitford or Hepscoth. Pegswood has a limited local shops and a Cooperative Food store located on Dark Lane in the centre of Pegswood. Ashington provides Pegswood with an alternative shopping destination. From discussions with Parish Councillors it is considered residents use both Ashington and Morpeth equally for their shopping needs.
- 9.7.3 Morpeth currently has a large Morrisons supermarket. Adjacent to this is a Lidle. The audit has also identified an Iceland on Bridge Street and a food section within M&S. The existing Morrisons will move to a new site, located along Dark Lane on its completion in summer 2013. Morpeth has a range of local independent shops and other customer trade businesses such as cafes. Morpeth's independent shops were a valued asset according to the feedback Plan Areas Launch event with many comments requesting their preservation to be a priority.
- 9.7.4 With the future closure of the existing Morrisons and projected population growth in the Plan Area, the potential for another supermarket to move onto the site would negate increased demand on other food stores in Morpeth.
- 9.7.5 Despite it being the destination for those from other parishes and rural areas, Morpeth town centre is not the only locality of shops in Morpeth. Abby Meadows, High Church (South West) area of Morpeth has a row of eight local shops and other services (take away, estate agents etc.).

Whilst these shops might serve the High Church area, they do not provide the facilities to attract custom from other areas of Morpeth or the wider Plan Area.

## **9.8 Community Centres and Village Halls**

9.8.1 “Village halls provide a valuable function, accommodating such uses as meetings, play groups, functions and youth clubs. They generally act as a centre for community activities and social life” (Castle Morpeth Borough Council, 2003)

9.8.2 Community Centres are important facilities for providing communal and social activities. They can also provide opportunities for education and further extracurricular activities as well as events for specific age groups. Policies at a local and national level are very supportive of community facilities and recognise their importance in rural contexts.

9.8.3 The following community centres were identified by the Audit:

- Morpeth Town Hall
- The Parish of Morpeth Village Hall
- Storey Park Centre, Morpeth
- St. James Centre, Morpeth
- Barnabus Safe and Sound, Morpeth
- Mitford Bridge Community Centre
- St. Cuthbert’s Church Hebron
- Pegswood & District Social Club
- St. Margaret’s Church Hall, Pegswood
- Hepscoth Parish Village Hall

9.8.4 Other locations where venues can be hired such as Social Clubs and Working Men’s clubs are available in Morpeth and in Pegswood to a degree. Church halls provide a venue for community and other groups to meet; Hebron where St. Cuthberts Church is used and there are no community centres provided is an example of this.

## **9.9 Museums, Art and Entertainment**

9.9.1 The provision of cultural and entertainment facilities helps contribute to the wellness and health of communities according to the NPPF (DCLG, 2012). The following facilities were identified by this audit:

- Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum
- Morpeth Chantry Craft Centre
- Carlisle Park (facilities mentioned in Sports Facilities and Leisure)

9.9.2 Arts Council England is seeking to strengthen national and regional museums and the relationships between museums and other cultural facilities like libraries (ACE, 2011). The audit has not been able to identify a cinema in the Plan Area, with reference to launch meeting feedback; a cinema would be a popular addition to the area.

## **9.10 Places of Worship**

9.10.1 The NPPF states that places of worship as well as other local facilities should be planned for positively (DCLG, 2012). The most recent data from the Office of National Statistics shows the most prominent religion in Northumberland is Christianity (ONS, 2012). Places of worship are important from a religious perspective, but can also provide important meeting and event venues for a community. This is shown in the utilisation of St. Cuthbert's Church, Hebron, mentioned under the Community Centres section also. The following places of worship were also identified:

- St James the Great, Morpeth
- St Mary the Virgin, Morpeth
- St Aidans, Morpeth
- Morpeth Baptist Church
- Morpeth Methodist Church, Morpeth
- Morpeth Parish Church, Morpeth
- New Life Christian Centre, Morpeth
- St George's United Reformed Church, Morpeth

- St Robert of Newminster, Morpeth
- Pegswood Methodist Church, Pegswood
- St Margaret, Pegswood
- St Mary Magdalene, Mitford
- St Cuthbert, Hebron
- Morpeth Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

## 10.0 Waste Management

10.1.1 The plan area falls under a Joint Municipal Waste Strategy between the seven district councils of the County. Agreed in 2003 this strategy provides a framework for waste management for the entire county. The strategy led to the agreement of a Waste Private Finance Initiative (PFI) deal between SITA UK Ltd and Northumberland County Council.

### 10.2 Household Waste

10.2.1 The PFI agreed in 2006 is a 28 year deal agreed to reduce dependence on landfill and increase recycling. This agreement has seen household waste sent to landfill reduce from 96% in 2001 to 12% (NCC).

10.2.2 There was significant investment in waste management infrastructure following the establishment of the PFI including the construction of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and waste transfer station at West Sleekburn. Residual waste unsuitable for recycling is sent outside the county to the Tees Valley Energy from Waste Plant in Haverton Hill, Middlesbrough where it is used to generate electricity.

10.2.3 There is a household waste recovery centre in the plan area located between Morpeth and Pegswood, near the A197. These centres, thirteen of which exist throughout the county recycle 64% of which is delivered to them.

10.2.4 As the agreement is long term it any changes to the waste management within the Plan Area has to be done in conjunction with the County Council and Partners in the PFI.

### 10.3 3.8.2 Commercial and Industrial Waste

10.3.1 Facts and figures for commercial and industrial waste specifically for Northumberland and the Plan Area are not available.

## 11.0 Morpeth's Growth Scenario

- 11.1.1 This section will examine the potential location of future development across the Plan Area and through the audits research of existing infrastructure provision.
- 11.1.2 Morpeth is identified as a Tier 1 Settlement by the Northumberland County Council's Core Strategy Issues and Options (2012). As a designated Tier 1 Settlement, Morpeth is considered a key hub for "education, healthcare, housing, employment and retail" (NCC, 2012a:16). Tier 1 Settlements are expected to be main focus areas for "future development and regeneration"; the "location for planned housing and employment urban extensions" (NCC, 2012a:16). The audit and its results clearly highlighted the important role it serves to the wider and rural villages such as Hebron Hepscoth and Mitford. These small communities are lacking in services, relying on Morpeth for such services as healthcare provision, education wider public transport opportunities and convenience shopping.
- 11.1.3 Morpeth is the most sustainable settlement within the Plan Area, acknowledged by the local authority in its Sustainable Settlement Assessment (Castle Morpeth Borough Council, 2008), achieving the highest score within the entire Borough of Castle Morpeth. The assessment recognised that Morpeth provided a broad provision of local community services, shops and good transport links; buses and trains to alternative employment destinations.
- 11.1.4 Furthermore, in 2008 South East Northumberland was designated Growth Point status. This created a new partnership between government, local authority and Growth Point Partnerships which together seeks to increase the level of housing provision in the region and accelerate its delivery. As part of this new status, St. Georges Hospital development site located to the north of Morpeth was designated as a key growth point site.
- 11.1.5 Pegswood has been designated as a Tier 2 Settlement, the development principles for a tier 2 settlement is that "maintains and strengthens the role of the settlement as a service centre" (NCC, 2012a:14). Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford are Tier 4 Settlements which require development be "Small-scale infill, change of use or conversions to meet defined needs and contribute to maintaining and enhancing the viability of services and facilities in that and adjoining settlements" (NCC, 2012a:14).
- 11.1.6 An indicative figure for future development is taken from the Northumberland Five Year Deliverable Sites Assessment (NCC, 2012c). The Deliverable Sites Assessment provides up to date figures on new house provision for the period 2012-17 for Castle Morpeth. The

Northumberland Five Year Deliverable Sites Assessment (2012c) sets the housing need in Castle Morpeth as 130 dwellings per annum. Considering this figure and the expectation that as a tier 1 settlement Morpeth will be the focus for new housing, quantum growth expected for the Plan Area is approximately 75-100 dwellings per annum.

11.1.7 As such it is understood that development in the plan area will be focussed within the Parish of Morpeth and will be limited in other settlements when and where suitable opportunities arise.

## **11.2 4.1 Development Growth in Morpeth.**

11.2.1 Recognising the importance of Morpeth within the Plan Area and the concentration of development occurring predominately within the parish, it needs to be further ascertained as to the spatial distribution of development within and around Morpeth. Using the Audits results and in recognition of each sections key challenges, the consideration of future development and its preferable location will now be discussed.

11.2.2 Morpeth Town is principally bisected by the River Wansbeck; creating 'north Morpeth' and 'south' Morpeth. South Morpeth comprises of predominately residential town extensions from the 1960-70's, with the amalgamation of Stobhill and Loansdean into Morpeth's Conurbation. The south is serviced by regular buses taking residents north across Telford Bridge into Morpeth's Town Centre. North Morpeth comprises the towns historic fabric and layout with small pockets of twentieth century development; most noticeably Wansdyke Estate to the west of Morpeth. For the following reasons it is consider future development should occur to the north of Morpeth:

- Distance of future residents from Morpeth's Town Centre

11.2.3 It is consider the previous settlement extensions to the south of Morpeth has taken residents further away, almost out of walking distance from the town centre where services are predominantly clustered. Further residential development beyond the existing settlement boundary will only increase future residents distance to the centre of Morpeth. As such increase the potential of private car use to transport grocery shopping. Furthermore the study has identified critical transport capacity at Telford Bridge. Future development in the south will inevitably mean residents who wish to travel north of Morpeth towards the town centre or Pegswood and Ashington will have to cross Telford Bridge exacerbating the issues.

11.2.4 Future residential development in the north of Morpeth will be located significantly closer to the town centre, within walking distance. However, if residences did decide to use the car their travel would not increase capacity at Telford Bridge.

- Morpeth Northern Bypass

11.2.5 One of the fundamental reasons for completing the Northern Bypass, along with relieving congestion, is to unlock and improve the viability of development land to the north of Morpeth. With the bypass's inclusion within all development plans over the past 10-12 years, it will successfully provide alternative and greater means of access to two important designated sites: St. Georges Hospital (principally residential) and Fairmoor/Northcote Site (principally employment based).

11.2.6 Future residents situated in the north of Morpeth would have better accessibility to and from the A1 and the rest of South East Northumberland through the new Northern Bypass thereby avoiding travel through the town centre. This is of further relevance in light of residents accessing employment using private transport, which is recognised as being high in Castle Morpeth and the Plan Area. Residential development to the north would alleviate commuter traffic from this pinch point between the A197, A192 and Telford Bridge, instead diverting drivers along the bypass and onto the A1.

11.2.7 It is also recognised traffic flows through the town centre need to be calmed. This will be alleviated through the construction of the new Bypass; however, a one way system should be investigated. A one way system operating clockwise, starting from Bridge Street with the junction of Telford Bridge heading north along Newgate Street and terminating at Appleby Junction, Manchester Street would significantly reduce car travel through Morpeth's Centre. This would increase pedestrian priority and safety within the street, while also decreasing noise and air pollution. Traffic would instead be redirect along the A197 Damside/Dark Lane towards the supermarkets and on to Pegswood.

11.2.8 An assessment to the Department of Transport states that new bypass will enable potentially 1540 dwellings on St George's development site however this will be dependent upon the outcome of the core strategy. It is recognised a positive growth scenario should enable 1600 new dwellings by 2031, and they can deliver 480 of these on land already under development ownership (as well as 240,000 square feet of commercial/industrial). Furthermore a Homes and Communities Agency letter supporting the St. Georges scheme says that two-thirds of these new homes are dependent upon delivery of the road. (DfT 2012 – Morpeth Assessment)

- Sewerage Capacity

11.2.9 Within the north of Morpeth capacity for waste water and drainage is less of a concern than that of the south. The south is currently at near full capacity with planned investment being

undertaken to alleviate the issue of waste water flooding. Northumbrian Water has stated a preference for future development to occur in the north or east of Morpeth. This is for three reasons; closer proximity to the waste water treatment works located to the east of Morpeth, laying new sewer and drainage networks will be considerably easier to the north and east rather than upgrading the existing network in the south, and finally, due to Morpeth topography drainage will occur naturally from the north and east down towards the waste water treatment works.

- Additional Benefits

11.2.10 Supporting growth to the north of Morpeth provides further opportunities for the town. The implementations of new car parks and a possible park and ride service operating between the Northgate hospital, St. Georges new development, Morpeth's town centre and Northumberland's County Council offices to the south could decrease car travel and congestion.

- Potential Shortcomings for Development in North Morpeth

11.2.11 It is acknowledged that development in the north would present problems. Morpeth train station is situated in the south. Re-distributing future residents to the north contradicts moves for a shift towards sustainable modes of transport. However it is considered the provision of a new bus services operating from the north of Morpeth through the town centre to the Station will mitigate this issue if provided as a good interchange as previously discussed within the Transport Chapter of the Audit.

11.2.12 The capacity of schools with catchment areas in north Morpeth to support growth is considered to be limited. Based on planned admissions numbers for 2012, schools supporting North Morpeth are at capacity or oversubscribed. The King Edward VI School and Morpeth Newminster Middle School both had higher allocations of pupils than the planned admissions number for 2012. In the case of Morpeth Newminster this number was not significant with just 2 pupils over the original allocation; however it does call into question the school's capacity to manage future growth. The King Edward VI School has had a further second year where final allocation was above the planned admission number. This raises concerns with capacity in Morpeth for increases in child education needs.

### **11.3 Developer Contributions**

11.3.1 According to the infrastructural provisions highlighted in Hebron, Mitford and Hepscoth it is considered that development growth will be limited. It is therefore considered that developer contributions through planning obligations and/or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will be

limited. This will mean that funding for infrastructure will have to be achieved through alternative sources of public and/or private investments.

11.3.2 However it is considered developer contributions can be used to gain funding from Morpeth's developments to contribute to better development. Such funds could be allocated to pressing infrastructure concerns within the immediate proximity of development.

## 12.0 Conclusion

12.1.1 The predominant supply of services within the Plan Area is located mainly within the Tier 1 settlement of Morpeth. Outside of Morpeth in the more rural settings there is limited provision of infrastructural services; as such residents of these settlements depend upon Morpeth as the hub for service provision. The audit identifies the following infrastructure within the Plan Area as having a good level according to identified standards:

- Healthcare is considered to be supplied to a satisfactory standard in the Plan Area, with GP surgeries receiving good patient satisfaction survey responses and the provision of a number of care home facilities throughout the area.
- Community Services are concentrated in Morpeth as their location in rural areas is often economically unviable. Whilst there was no capacity issues were identified, their location in Morpeth puts pressure on congestion and parking in Morpeth. With future growth comes the requirement to maintain the current provision, with the possibility of addition to current service provision in Morpeth. Where possible, innovative ways of providing cost effective services in rural areas should be investigated.

12.1.2 . Across the Plan Area, the audit has identified the following infrastructural short comings:

- Education capacity is currently under pressure in north Morpeth; however this is less the case in south Morpeth. Whilst capacity might be under pressure (shown by Ofsted reports and NNC admissions handbook), education in Morpeth is generally considered to be of a high quality. A key finding was that pressure on capacity comes from out of catchment attendance.
- Transport infrastructure is under pressure particularly within Morpeth, with congestion in rush hours and high pressure on the parking provision. This is linked to the shortfall of public transport provision to the rural settlements within the Plan Area.
- Sewerage and Water Drainage capacities are near critical in south Morpeth, Pegwood, and Hepscoot due to the topography of the area.
- Renewable energy supply in the area is non-existent. To further support National Initiatives and support developers and residents who wish to contribute to sustainable energy, The Neighbourhood Plan will need to provide a clear stance on sustainable energy seeking to

designate suitable localities for the provision of renewable energy facilities: thereby meeting national energy targets.

- Sports facilities are concentrated in Morpeth but no capacity issues regarding them were identified. Despite this, the condition of Riverside Leisure Centre has been a cause for concern and investment should be sort for its improvement.
- Telecommunications currently operate below standards set nationally and by NCC. Mitford suffers from bad mobile phone coverage. The Plan Area as a whole operates below standards for broadband and internet provision, Hebron suffers internet speeds of only 0.5 mbs. The Neighbourhood Plan should seek to improve provisions and adhere to the aims of the Northumberland Local Broadband Plan and therefore support local and particularly rural businesses.

12.1.3 The Infrastructure Audit, considering the role Morpeth plays within the Plan Area, has identified the following as major infrastructural constraints to growth:

- Traffic Congestion within Morpeth, during rush hours, routes through Morpeth easily becomes congested. Telford Bridge is identified as a bottle neck for traffic trying to cross the river. Development in north Morpeth allows residents greater access to the A1 and the south (Tyne and Wear conurbations), and easier access, via the Pegswood Bypass, to the east (Ashington, Blyth and the Coast)
- The demise of public bus services has limited access for those living within rural parishes, leading to the use of private transport leading to exacerbated congestion and parking concerns within Morpeth.
- Sewerage Capacity within south Morpeth is at critical. Although major investment work is underway, capacity is challenged in north Morpeth, it has been identified that further works can be taken to reduce capacity concerns in north Morpeth, where such works to the south are identified as being harder to put in place.

12.1.4 Whilst this audit identifies north Morpeth as the most likely location for the future growth, the challenges mentioned above will continue to constrain development. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to seriously consider and address public transport connecting rural areas to Morpeth, congestion in Morpeth and the capacity of the sewerage network.

## 13.0 References

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## Appendix 1: Plan Area & Parish Maps

## Appendix 2: Transport

## Appendix 2.1: Highways & Networks Map

## Appendix 2.2: Congestion Map

**Source: Author's Own**

## Appendix 2.3: Parking Charges

Source: Northumberland County Council (2012) Parking Charges. Available At:  
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=732> [Accessed 01 January 2013]

## Appendix 2.4: Bus Timetables & Designated Routes

Source: Arriva (2012) North East – Bus Timetables and Routes. Available At:  
<http://www.arrivabus.co.uk/timetables-and-tickets/timetables/north-east/> [Accessed 01  
January 2013]

## Appendix 2.5: Rail Timetable

Source: Northern Rail (2012) Timetables. Available At:

<http://www.northernrail.org/travel/timetables> [Accessed 01 January 2013]

## Appendix 2.6: Gritting Maps

Source: Northumberland County Council (2012) Detailed Gritting Map. Available At:  
<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=12252> [Accessed 01 January 2013]

## Appendix 2.7: Crash Map Accidents

**Source: Crash Map (2012)**

## Appendix 3: Education Table

Authors Own

## Appendix 4: Community Services

## Appendix 4.1: Community Services Map Plan Area

## Appendix 4.2: Community Services Map Morpeth

## Appendix 4.3: Morpeth Library Use Statistics

## Appendix 4.4: PPG17 Table (Open Space and Sport Pitches Review)