

Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan
What, Where and How – Third Caba Workshop
Monday 11 March 2013 - Morpeth Town Hall

The workshop was attended by around 25 residents – most of whom have been attending the various Neighbourhood Plan Topic Groups - and was facilitated by Colin Haylock (Caba Built Environment Expert) and assisted by Ian Campbell (Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator) and Chris Anderson (Planning Aid England) and Planning Aid volunteers.

The purpose of the workshop was to look again at “the what and the where” (in respect of areas for protection; areas for enhancement; and areas for development) before considering how to achieve the quality of development that we aspire to.

There were four discussion groups with a mix of representation from across the Plan Area.

1. The first discussion session sought to reprise on some of the conclusions of the second workshop around What and Where for areas to be protected, enhanced and developed.

The feedback from these discussions:

Protection:

Town Centre Conservation Area – *but recognised that there was also a need for economic dynamism to maintain vibrancy and competitiveness; and also accessibility to visitors and tourists (parking, signage etc); and need to retain these visitors for longer to provide increased footfall for retailers*

Possible Extension to Conservation Area;

Setting of settlements – settlement boundaries; MNBP northern settlement limit

Green corridors – *adjacent to MNBP; Burns act as green corridors*

Retention of areas of separation (*but also need for improvement*) -Loansdean / Clifton; Pegswood / Morpeth; Mitford / Morpeth

Villages – *but becoming even more dependent on external services as accessibility to Morpeth by public transport gets worse*

Morpeth and Cottingwood Commons

Small scale amenity spaces within residential areas

Enhancement:

Brownfield Development Opportunities - including re-use of St George’s Hospital and Northgate Hospital (sites)

(Virtual)Business Hub;

Coopies Lane Improvements;

Public Transport – quality provision to encourage modal shift; re-use of freight lines for passenger services; new station car park (*but charges negating this “offer”*); Park and Ride (*But practicability/financial viability*); *access and better links to station; additional station at Coopies Lane?*

Improvement of shop frontages (*but grants no longer available*)

Connectivity and access – how can we improve traffic circulation – improved / new A1 junctions at Clifton and Whalton Road; Stobhill - Loansdean Link – *but cost and acceptability and is there a reasonable alternative via Stannington Station?*

Development

Potential for new MNBP to become a development corridor (*although risk that this might negate its traffic circulation / redistribution role?*)

Dispersal of (new) development whilst maintaining compactness of settlement
Hotel Development– edge of town (new A1 junction?) and town centre opportunities
Heighley Gate – *but now seen enough development without adversely impacting upon existing centres?*

2. Infrastructure

Colin Haylock led a discussion on infrastructure delivery. S106 Agreements and their associated “pooled contributions” were to be largely replaced by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL); in Northumberland this would happen following the adoption of the Core Strategy and associated Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which would enable the establishment and introduction of an agreed charging regime.

The capacity of the existing Sewage Treatment Works (STW) and associated sewerage networks were both critical infrastructure that could constrain the scale and pattern of development in Morpeth. Current programmed improvement works at the STW by Northumbrian Water could allow for the development of a further 700 (planned) dwellings but this would not be sufficient for the plan period as a whole.

Colin also indicated that social / community infrastructure (sports / leisure; greenspace) could potentially once again benefit from Lottery Funding (post 2012 Olympics / Olympics legacy).

In discussion the possibility that in an age of reducing public expenditure we may need to improve existing facilities to make them work better at the same or reduced running costs; town and parish councils may have a role in taking over the running of community assets .

3. Quality of development

Colin gave a presentation on different tools for ensuring that quality developments might be delivered (Presentation to be placed on website);
He referred to a Cabe / English Heritage publication – Building in Context – that presented a series of case studies of new development in sensitive historic locations that drew out wider development principles for wider application (<http://www.helm.org.uk/guidance-library/building-in-context/>).

He also referred to an English Heritage publication - Constructive Conservation in Practice (<http://www.helm.org.uk/guidance-library/constructive-conservation-in-practice/ccdpsweb.pdf>) – that included Cooper’s Studios in Newcastle and the Bluecoat School in Liverpool amongst its case studies.

Colin advised of the need to understand the context for a development but not be afraid to contrast with the original.

Building for Life (http://www.hbf.co.uk/uploads/media/BfL_A4_booklet_singlepages_.pdf) is the national standard for design of new homes and neighbourhoods jointly produced by the Design Council and home Builders federation and refreshed in 2012 following the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Placecheck (<http://www.placecheck.info/>) is a simple tool to use an urban or village walkabout to identify what is special about an area (and needs protecting or enhancement); what needs to be fixed; and what are the opportunities for improvement.

4. Ian Campbell closed the workshop (and indeed the series of workshops) by highlighting how they had helped participants; in particular they had enabled participants to develop a vision for Morpeth and its adjoining communities – whilst we can shape development through neighbourhood planning it has got to be with a particular “end” in mind; it had helped us look at things holistically rather than from an individual topic-perspective; and it had helped us to think spatially – about what type of development might go where and how different components of development relate to each other.

At the Issues and Options consultation we will need to bring all our current thinking together from our Topic Groups, our cross cutting themes and from these workshops to enable the wider public to make informed choices on the options that we present. The individual reports would be prepared by end May and the consultation exercise take place in the summer.

Colin Haylock was formally thanked for his contribution and facilitation over the three workshops.

IHC

14 March 2013