

**Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan**  
**What Sort of Places and Where – Second Cabe Workshop**  
**Monday 4 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 (Cabe Built Environment Expert) and assisted by Ian Campbell (Neighbourhood Plan Coordinator) and Chris Anderson (Planning Aid England) and Planning Aid volunteers.

It was a follow up to a Visioning Workshop held on 5 February that was also facilitated by Colin Haylock. Further to the outcomes of discussions at that Workshop, the purpose of this workshop was to present some of the development principles spatially, and consider what areas in the Plan Area might need to be protected and where might be more appropriate areas for development.

Colin had prepared a series of sketch plans that set out key green corridors and suggested green buffers to maintain the separation between settlements; he further highlighted the green edges to the major roads both on the approaches to Morpeth and extending in towards the town centre.

A second series of sketch plans reviewed circulation issues within the Plan Area. The first highlighted some of the current access issues to the town from the A1 arising from current junction arrangements. To the north of the town access from the A1 would be improved as a result of a new junction being provided in association with the development of the Morpeth Northern Bypass. As well as reducing the volume of through traffic within Morpeth it also will link up with the Pegswood Bypass to improve connectivity to the A1 from Pegswood and South East Northumberland more generally. Within Morpeth cross town movements are constrained by the limited crossing points over the River Wansbeck with significant traffic congestion occurring at Telford Bridge at peak periods. With limited scope for additional crossing points Colin explored the potential benefits of an all movement A1 junction at Clifton and the creation of a Loansdean - Stobhill Link Road. In general terms the provision of the Morpeth Northern Bypass had a positive influence on potential development patterns within Morpeth and the Plan Area more generally, whilst traffic congestion associated with the Telford Bridge had a negative influence on potential development patterns.

Arising from these considerations Colin introduced a series of sketch plans that illustrated possible development scenarios in south and north Morpeth.

There were six discussion groups with a mix of Topic Group interests and representation from across the plan area. The initial discussion revisited some of the key conclusions from the first workshop in terms of the role and character of the different settlements within the plan area and the drivers and influences on overall development pattern.

Some of the key points from these discussions were:

- Morpeth was the main settlement that would need to accommodate development;
- Pegswood should be allowed to develop as a more sustainable community; in view of its complementary role can it contribute to meeting Morpeth's housing requirements? (to be taken up with LPA planners)
- Future development needs to relate to infrastructure and service capacity
- Integrity of villages (Mitford, Hebron and Hepscott) to be retained
- Retention of settlement boundaries supported
- Retention of attractive gateways / corridors and greenspace and woodland similarly supported
- Was Northgate a sustainable location?

- Mixed (use) Development desirable
- Development **within** Morpeth was preferred; the scale of the re-development opportunity may determine the need for greenfield development
- Economy Matters - tourism seen as development opportunities potentially giving rise to employment opportunities in the hospitality sector; retail offer a key strength that need further marketing
- Social matters – need for more affordable housing if young people are to be retained; school catchment issues; quality of leisure opportunities may act as a constraint on realising development potential

Informed by some of Colin's ideas on possible development patterns the second set of discussion considered possible development patterns and development drivers. Colin prefaced the feedback session by presenting his ideas for a development scenario based around the Morpeth Northern Bypass. One group sought to demonstrate how a development scenario based largely on development on previously developed land could accommodate the likely scale of housing that Morpeth might be expected to accommodate. A second group highlighted that maintaining the vibrancy of the town centre could be a development driver in a service led economy.

The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to explore a design led approach to development; applying some of the key development principles supported through the visioning workshop and seeing how they, and other development drivers such as the transport network, helped shape future development possibilities.

The final workshop will consider how we can achieve higher quality development that respects rather than detracts from Morpeth's sense of place and identity.

**IHC**

**08.03.2013**