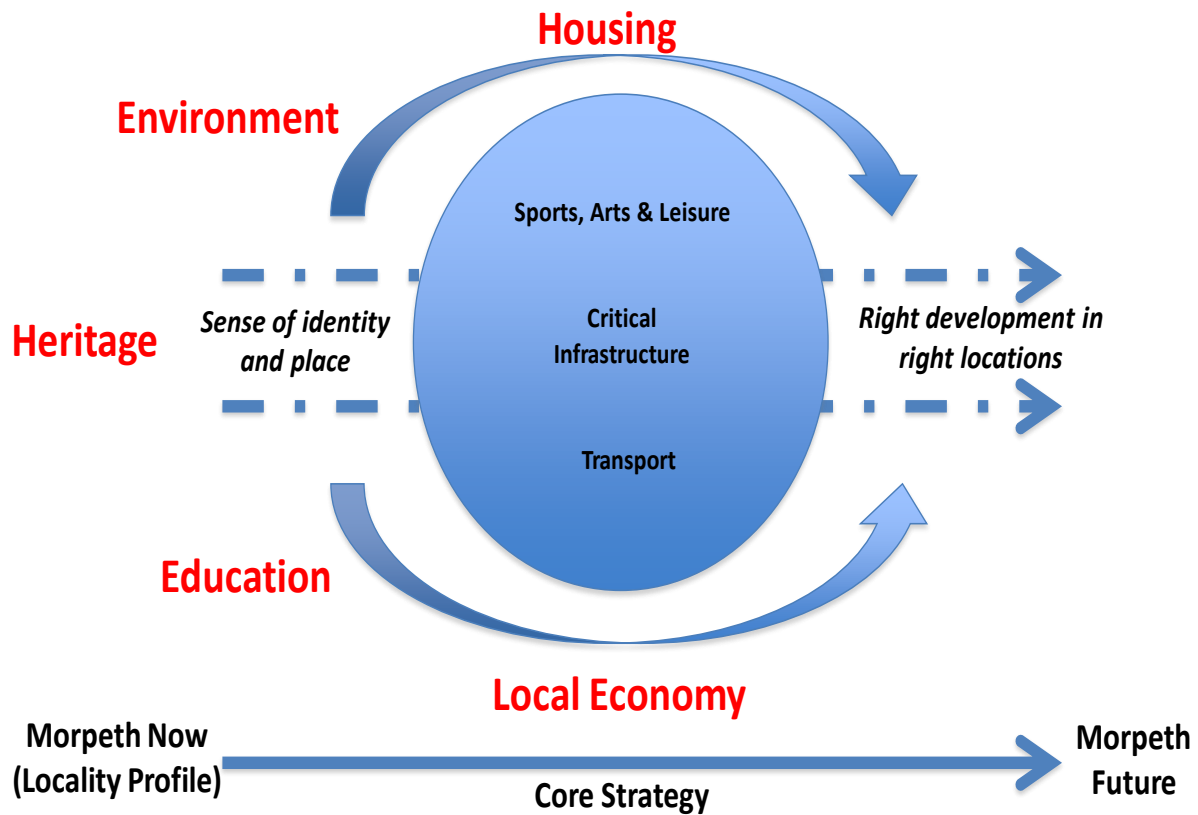


Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan - Overview



Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan (MNP)

Issues & Options Technical Paper Housing Topic Group (HTG)

Latest Draft: v11 14/05/2013

SECTION A: BACKGROUND

A1. **Morpeth** is a historic rural market town, classified within the Northumberland draft Core Strategy documents as a main settlement, due to its role as a rural service centre catering for a wide hinterland, especially to the north and the west. For the purposes of drawing up a Neighbourhood Plan it was decided to include in the plan area the adjoining communities of **Hebron, Hepscoth, Mitford** and **Pegswood** because of their strong functional relationship with Morpeth in terms of local services, retail offer, education and employment.

A2. Housing is one of a number of interwoven community topics being considered as part of the MNP process, which aspires to ensure a satisfactory and sustainable future for Morpeth and its surrounding villages over the course of the next 20 years. Other core topics are Education, Environment, Heritage, and Local Economy; with additional cross cutting themes considering Infrastructure, Sports & Leisure, and Transport.

A3. **Morpeth** lies 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne and has a population of around 15,000. First established in medieval times, Morpeth lies in the valley of the River Wansbeck, which forms a huge loop through the town, which with the local topography effectively divides the town into various distinctive areas. After WW2, Morpeth expanded onto the plateau land to the north and south of the town but in an unobtrusive way, avoiding ribbon development and with clearly defined boundaries. The town has therefore maintained its character as an historic, rural market town surrounded by open countryside. It is an attractive and popular place to live, so it also has a role as a dormitory settlement for SE Northumberland and Tyneside. Protection of Morpeth's rural setting and heritage are therefore seen as vital when considering all and any further housing development in Morpeth.

A4. **Hebron** village is approximately 3 miles north of Morpeth and has a population of around 80. Whilst there has been a small amount of development, it has not been considered appropriate to develop beyond the settlement boundary defined within the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (CMDLP) as it was considered that significant further development would adversely affect the built form and character of the village and encroach upon open countryside. Northgate Hospital, a major employer and a site with outline planning permission for a considerable housing development is within Hebron parish. It is considered within the scope of Morpeth for housing allocation for the purposes of this MNP.

A5. **Hepscott** village is approximately 2 miles southeast of Morpeth. It has a population of around 530 and is a popular place to live because of its attractive rural setting in woodland with the Hepscott Burn running through the village. The residential provision is in the upper end of the market. It was not considered appropriate to develop beyond the settlement boundary defined within the CMDLP for the period ending 2006 because the wooded character of the village would be damaged. It was considered that any development in the village should be infill only. Hepscott Park, a site with considerable development potential, is outside the boundary and therefore out of scope of this MNP.

A6. **Mitford** is a largely unspoilt village situated approximately 2 miles west of Morpeth. With a population of around 250, Mitford is a dispersed settlement with two main residential groupings at Fontside and Stable Green. The topographically complex and special setting of the village has led to it being included in the area defined as of High Landscape Value in order to protect it from development that could detract from the character. Again it was not considered appropriate to develop beyond the settlement boundary defined within the CMDLP although there may be some small infill sites available. The executive development at Tranwell Woods lies within Mitford parish.

A7. **Pegswood** lies approximately 2 miles to the north east of Morpeth and has a population of around 3,400. It was originally a colliery village, but the coal mine closed in 1969, so the village has increasingly become a dormitory settlement with residents travelling to work in Morpeth, Ashington, Cramlington, North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne. The pit-head buildings, spoil heaps and adjoining land have been cleared and landscaped and, during the 1970s and early 1980s new housing has extended the village westwards. Pegswood Parish Council would like the village to have a greater variety of services and facilities, so recognises that in order to attract inward investment it needs further housing development.

A8. Consequently this Issues and Options Technical Paper will focus our housing proposals for residential development mainly on Morpeth town but also on Pegswood village.

A9. In order to ensure that the future for the MNP Area is as a sustainable and mixed community it is recognised that, alongside market housing, there is a need for good quality affordable housing. The exact amount of affordable housing needed, tenure, property type and size mix, and any additional community needs to be met, will be informed by the results of the recently undertaken County Council Housing Needs Survey, which should be available for our MNP area in Summer 2013.

SECTION B: CONSTRAINTS AND DRIVERS FOR DEVELOPMENT

B1. Although Northumberland County Council (NCC) are currently consulting on their Core Strategy Preferred Options, work around housing and Green Belt designation have not been completed, but will hopefully be available for consultation later in 2013. Ultimately the MNP must be consistent with the new NCC Local Plan when it is finalized. It will have to provide at least the number of homes required by that NCC Local Plan, and include affordable homes in line with the countywide average target suggested.

B2. To the west of Morpeth, development has been discounted in previous Local Plans because the settlement boundary was well established, but also because of various policy designations such as Areas of High Landscape Value, Sites of Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserve and High Common, which is Protected Open Space.

B3. To the east of Morpeth, development outside the settlement boundary has been discounted due to restricted access, loss of high grade agricultural land, proximity to the Wastewater Treatment Works (and land required for its necessary expansion) and topography. A planning application to build homes in this area has just been rejected on appeal¹ so it would appear that this area should still be discounted.

B4. There are strategic public green spaces that require protection, such as the corridor along the River Wansbeck, Morpeth Common, Bluebell Wood, Cottingwood Common and the environmental corridors along the main routes into Morpeth, all of which are an essential part of the town's character. In addition, there are a number of small green spaces listed as Public Open Space within the District Local Plan to 2006 and which need to be assessed for protection as opposed to development in the MNP. In addition the previous Local Plan sought to ensure that settlements did not coalesce.

B5. NCC produced a document entitled "People and Planning 5 year Housing Land Supply 2011-2016" which found that sufficient sites with planning permission to provide for housing requirements over several years had not come forward for development for a variety of reasons. This remains the case mainly due to the on-going difficult economic climate. Another factor that explains a perceived lack of development in Morpeth over the last few decades is that the former Castle Morpeth Borough Council (CMBC) deliberately, and successfully, focused housing development on the former mining villages in the east of the Borough in order to regenerate the area; also proposed major development at St George's Hospital in the town which still awaits progress, and allocated a large site at St Mary's Hospital Stannington (south of the town) which is currently under construction.

¹ 11/0550/OUT Land to rear of Salisbury Street (Outline) 35 units, Appeal APP/P2935/A/12/2181035

B6. There are some key factors that impact considerably on where development can realistically be considered in Morpeth. These include:-

- Delivery of the Morpeth Northern Bypass (MNB). This bypass, if approved², will be a huge game changer for Morpeth's future and, potentially, also for Pegswood. It will create access to deliverable land for development, both brownfield and greenfield. Much of this land is dependent upon delivery of the MNB for access, which is currently scheduled for completion in 2016, although some is available for development now.
- Flood risk is a real concern for Morpeth. Some areas of the town are best avoided altogether for development, while development proposals in other parts of the town must address the issue of their impact upon flooding both within their own sites and elsewhere in the town.
- Growth will inevitably impact on infrastructure such as drainage, sewage, health services, public transport etc. and capacity issues must be addressed within careful, integrated planning.
- Development will impact upon the existing highways network. The town centre in particular is very constricted and the impact of additional traffic must be considered carefully, especially at the Telford Bridge junction, which is one of the most congested in the whole county (Para 3.52 Appendix A LTP Strategy 2011-2026).
- Elsewhere in the town there is a need for connectivity (pedestrian, cycle and vehicular), to prevent the outer areas of the town becoming isolated from the town centre and from one another.
- Schools need to be able to cope with demand and be within reasonable travelling distance in order to minimise the need for car usage as much as possible.

² MNB is major infrastructure so it has to be approved within central Government planning system, not just NCC.

SECTION C: PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

C1. Prior to latest local government reorganization there were 6 District Councils, with each being a Local Planning Authority. NCC became the new Unitary Authority in 2009, but has not yet completed a new Local Plan for the whole county. Many CMBC planning policies were “saved” by the Secretary of State until such time as they were replaced by an up to date Local Plan, and these remain the only existing Local Plan for the former Castle Morpeth area.

C2. The government introduced its new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012. NPPF Para 215 says: “...due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).”

C3. Two recent Appeals determined by the Planning Inspectorate (land south of Loansdean and land behind Salisbury Street, both in Morpeth) demonstrate that the “saved” policies are consistent with NPPF, namely in relation to the settlement boundary and in relation to landscape corridors, both of which were seen as protecting the open countryside. The Inspector in the second Appeal indicated that these policies could not be considered out of date just because the housing figures were out of date. Furthermore, NPPF Para 12 says that the presumption in favour of sustainable development must not be allowed to work against the Local Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

C4. The Localism Act 2011 included Neighbourhood Planning in order to make the planning system more democratic, clear and effective. The MNP can say where the community thinks new houses, businesses and shops should go, and what they should look like. It must, however, have regard to national planning policy, and be in general conformity with NCC’s Local Plan (when it is finally produced), and with other legal requirements.

C5. NPPF has an underlying growth agenda. Local Plans, and therefore Neighbourhood Plans, must meet the need for market and affordable housing; demonstrate a supply of housing sites to deliver the need estimated for a 5 year period; and where possible, identify sufficient housing land to meet need for up to 15 years. Plans should provide for a mix of housing to cater for different groups, and affordable housing where needed. Housing development must be of sustainable design, improve the character of the area and reflect local distinctiveness.

C6. The NCC Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation document proposes that Morpeth will be designated as one of the main towns in Northumberland that will not only be the focus for major development, but is also one of 4 towns to be selected for additional large-scale development and growth. Pegswood however, is included in the “other” settlements category and is not a focus for development.

C7. NPPF Para 17 refers to the planning principle: “actively manage patterns of growth..... and focus development in locations which are or can be made sustainable”.

CONCLUSION

Consequently as a result of all of above, and using our local knowledge and considering various relevant documents, we have developed a set of Guiding Principles to help us to decide **WHAT** should be built within the MNP area, **WHERE** it should be built and **HOW** it should be achieved.

MNP Housing Topic Group Guiding Principles:

- Acknowledge **Morpeth** will be a main town for future population growth within Northumberland.
- Further development of **Pegswood** to enhance community life, with housing development sufficient to strengthen its position as a centre for local services.
- Integrity of surrounding villages including **Hebron, Hepscott** and **Mitford** should be retained, to avoid their coalescing with Morpeth town.
- Further development should not damage environmental and heritage features that give Morpeth its special character; and not expand inappropriately beyond its current boundaries, so protecting surrounding countryside.
- Range of well-designed property types and sizes should be provided including affordable housing and housing for younger and older people, so as to promote a balanced housing market.
- To require new housing to contribute to well designed, high quality living environments and neighbourhoods and maintain local distinctiveness.
- Housing development must be linked to sufficient capacity / investment in local services, transport and employment opportunities in sustainable locations: e.g. schools, roads, water, sewerage, sewage treatment capacity, public transport.
- Advantage should be taken of opportunities presented by the proposed Morpeth Northern Bypass, currently scheduled for completion by end 2016.
- Previously developed land (brownfield sites³) should be prioritised where viable in preference to Greenfield sites.
- Mixed development (e.g. housing & commercial) should be considered to promote viability of the local economy, and to enhance sustainability of Morpeth and Pegswood.
- Make effective use of existing housing stock and other vacant property.
- Encourage high standards of energy efficiency in all housing stock.
- Avoid building in flood risk areas.

³ Page 6 of NPPF – Under Planning Core Principles: “Encourage the effective use of land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value”. There is a definition of Previously Developed Land in the glossary of terms at the end of the NPPF.

SECTION D: ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Using these initial Guiding Principles, the HTG has considered key housing **Issues** arising for the MNP area which are documented in turn below, together with various **Options** for MNP area community consultation. Multiple source documents, agencies, and individuals have been consulted to both inform and provide widespread evidence to the HTG, and these are specified in Appendix 1 at the end of this Housing Technical Paper. In addition, minutes of our HTG meetings including summaries of all received presentations by agencies / individuals are available for further scrutiny on the MNP website www.themorpethneighbourhoodplan.org.uk .

Issue 1: What is the extent of housing need and demand?

Issue 2: What specific needs have been identified?

Issue 3: Location of new housing?

Issue 4: Type, size, and tenure of housing?

Issue 5: How can affordability be delivered?

Issue 6: How can quality design and local distinctiveness be delivered?

Issue 7: How can we make more effective use of existing housing stock?

Issue 8: Gypsies and Travellers.

Issue 1: What is the extent of housing need and demand?

A key input to the MNP is the number of houses required to be built in the MNP area in the 20 year period 2013–2032. This input will be stipulated by NCC. The MNP can choose to allocate more housing than mandatory, but, by law, it cannot opt to allocate less.

After feedback on its Issues and Options document, NCC has decided to undertake a substantial amount of further work around the subject of housing. It has commissioned population and household modelling work together with an update to its long term employment forecasts. These will test a series of different growth based scenarios, which together with the findings of other updated evidence base studies will inform the scale and distribution of housing required in Northumberland, and the subsequent allocation to the MNP area. The results of these studies are expected to be available for consultation in summer 2013.

In the meantime, in order to be able to test potential housing need against supply, the Housing Topic Group has developed three working scenarios.

1. Base Case scenario: 1,500 houses over 20 years (75 p.a.)

This is considered to be the most likely scenario.

The start point is the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) allocations of housing units for the former CMBC, which are 130 p.a. for 2011-2016 and 120 p.a. thereafter. This generates a requirement of 2,500 houses to be built in the County for the next 20 years, including the most recent backlog of around 50 dwellings.

Only 35% of the CMBC requirement was allocated previously to Morpeth, with a larger allocation of 40% to the coastal villages of Widdrington Station, Ellington, Lynemouth, Pegswood and Hadston reflecting the strategy of former coalfield regeneration.⁴ Although initially successful, as evidenced by growth in Widdrington Station, existing outline permissions at Ellington and Lynemouth Collieries are not expected to be built during the current economic climate.

The indications in the NCC Preferred Options process are that Morpeth will be designated as one of the main towns in Northumberland that will not only be the focus for major development, but is also one of 4 towns to be selected for additional large-scale development and growth.

The key assumptions for this Base Case scenario are:

- rebalancing from coastal villages results in a 50% allocation to Morpeth
- growth target will be 20% above RSS requirement

The number of houses in the Base Case scenario is calculated as:

2,500 RSS (incl. backlog) + 20% growth = 3,000 units, x 50% allocated Morpeth = 1,500 units

It is implied that part of the former CMBC growth target is allocated to Ponteland, which in Preferred Options is designated as one of the service centres which will also be the focus for major development.

By coincidence, the August 2011 report commissioned by NCC and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) entitled "Sustainable Growth Scenarios for Morpeth" by David Lock Associates (Lock Report) used a forecast housing requirement of 1,500-1,600 houses to test the various location options.

Note that it is not possible for the MNP team to separate Pegswood supply within the available data.

2. Lower End of Range scenario: 1,250 houses over 20 years (63 p.a.)

The key assumptions for the Lower End of Range scenario are:

- rebalancing from coastal villages results in a 50% allocation to Morpeth
- zero growth above RSS requirement

The number of houses in the Lower End of Range scenario is calculated as:

2,500 RSS (incl. backlog) units + 0% growth, x 50% allocated Morpeth = 1,250 units

Please note that the NCC Outline Water Study (Final May 2012), which was used to test sewerage capacity etc., employed a maximum forecast of 1,030 units. This was due to the assumption of a continuing allocation of 35% within former CMBC. The implications of sewerage capacity on housing allocations are discussed later in this document.

⁴ Castle Morpeth Local Development Framework Core Strategy, not adopted due to Local Government Reorganisation

3. Upper End of Range scenario: 1,950 houses over 20 years (98 p.a.)

In its Core Strategy Issues and Options document, NCC listed potential household growth values in the ranges of 18%-30% above RSS targets with 20% growth included.

The key assumptions for the Upper End of Range scenario are:

- rebalancing from coastal villages results in a 50% allocation to Morpeth
- 20% growth target above RSS requirement
- further 30% household growth

The number of houses in the Upper End of Range scenario is calculated as:

2,500 RSS (incl. backlog) + 20% growth target = 3,000 units,
+ max. 30% household growth = 3,900 units, x 50% allocated to Morpeth = 1,950 units

The Lower End of Range and Upper End of Range scenarios will be used to test alternatives to options around the Base Case:

eg. if less housing is required, which greenfield sites can be spared;

eg. if more housing is required, which further greenfield sites need to be included

Affordable Housing

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (such as housing associations), for which guideline target rents are determined through a national rent regime. Affordable rented housing is let by local authorities or private registered providers of social housing at a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent. Intermediate affordable housing includes homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels, subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above and can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

Low cost market housing may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

The Northumberland County-wide Housing Needs Survey (DCA, 2012) shows, for the county, that if the affordable housing need was to be met over a 10 year period then, after allowing for current supply, an additional 242 properties would have to be delivered per annum over that period. NCC is developing the allocation of this requirement down to local area level. Its Preferred Options document indicates an average level of 30% affordable housing to total housing need.

Until more precise information becomes available, the MNP working assumption is that **30% of the houses required in the Base Case and other scenarios will be affordable housing.**

Issue 1 questions:

1. Do you agree with the HTG Guiding Principles? Yes / No / No opinion
2. Do you consider the range of scenarios to be realistic? Yes / No / No opinion
3. Considering the MNP area has an obligation to allocate at least the amount of housing stipulated by NCC, but cannot allocate less, should the MNP:
 - a. Allocate only the amount of housing required by NCC? Yes / No / No opinion
 - b. Allocate in excess of the requisite amount of housing? Yes / No / No opinion

If yes, please explain by how much the NCC required amount of housing should be exceeded and your reasons why?

Issue 2: What specific needs have been identified?

NCC is currently engaged in Population Modelling work which is initially assessing the county wide situation and will then look at 34 local areas. This will forecast population and take into account factors such as employment need, producing options for future housing forecasts. NCC is also undertaking a second study of Housing Needs across Northumberland, which will be subsequently broken down into 37 sub areas. These new data sources are expected to be available from Summer 2013, and our MNP technical assessments can be revised as appropriate thereafter. In the interim, existing public data has been used.

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2012), Northumberland's population is ageing, and is forecast to rise by 4.5% between 2011-2035. However, this represents a decline in all age bands except for those aged 65+ (up 63.5%), and in particular those aged 75+ (up 97.9%), aged 85+ (up 173.5%) and 90+ (up 241.4%). The 65+ group is forecast to grow from 20.6% of the total population in 2011 to 32.2% in 2035. Given the resource demands often associated with very elderly people, these are very significant figures.

From a housing point of view the implications of an ageing population can be looked at in a number of ways:

- The housing needs of disabled people. The Northumberland County-wide Housing Needs Survey shows that 25.7% of households in the County include somebody with a disability, with 50.5% of all disabled household members being over the age of 65 and 17.4% being over 80. On the other hand 22.7% were aged less than 49 years.

By far the largest group of disabled people were those with a walking difficulty (54%). While 23.3% had an asthmatic/respiratory problem; 22.1% have diabetes and 17% of disabled households included someone who had a learning disability or mental health problem.⁵

Around 11% of properties in the county have been adapted to meet the disability needs of the occupier, which may have been publicly-funded through the NCC's Minor Works or Disabled Facilities Grant budgets. In the context of an ageing population, these budgets are likely to come under more pressure in the future.

All new housing built is expected to meet the standards set out in Part M of the Building Regulations. The standards include wider doorways to enable wheelchair access, kitchen and bathroom layouts to suit those with limited mobility. However, Lifetime Homes go further than this, incorporating 16 'Design Criteria' that can be universally applied to new homes at minimal cost. Each design feature adds to the comfort and convenience of the home, and supports the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life. This ensures that adaptations are easier and more cost effective to carry out, and so help a resident to remain in their own home as their needs change over time.

⁵ Please note figures do not add to 100% as more than one response could be made in cases of multiple-disability.

- The housing needs of older people. The Housing Needs Survey asked existing households aged 65+ and planning a move within the County within the next 5 years a series of questions about their future housing requirements. As would be expected amongst an older age group with increasing mobility issues, the majority (53.5%) require bungalow accommodation. The number of bedrooms needed for those households expressing a requirement for a bungalow was 15% 1 bedroom, 65% 2 bedrooms, and 20% 3 bedrooms.

There was also a fairly high demand stated for supported housing at 13.4%, with 70.4% of this group expressing a demand for sheltered accommodation (social and private), 34.4% for independent living with support and 13.6%⁶ for Extra Care.⁷ 60% of those households expressing an interest in sheltered housing required 2 bedrooms accommodation, with 40% 1 bedroom. Some of this requirement will be addressed by the turnover of the existing sheltered stock, but acceptability of the existing stock to meet today's standards will need to be assessed in calculating the scale of new delivery. In addition, new delivery should be carefully planned to ensure that it does not worsen any problems with letting existing sheltered housing.

McCarthy & Stone have recently proposed a development of 51 x 1 bed and 2 beds 'Later Living' apartments in Morpeth, which is now the subject of an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

- Under-occupation (by older people). The Housing Needs Survey shows that the size of accommodation currently occupied by people aged 65+ in the former CMBC and Tynedale District areas is:
 - 5 bedrooms 4%
 - 4 bedrooms 18%
 - 3 bedrooms 37%
 - 2 bedrooms 30%
 - 1 bedroom 10%
 - Bedsit 1%

Across Northumberland almost 65% of households within the owner occupied no mortgage sector have 2+ spare bedrooms, which will include a high proportion of older households. Additionally almost half of current owner-occupier households with a mortgage also under-occupy and as these households grow older, the scale of under-occupation will increase year on year if the existing stock turnover is not improved. This could be a result of personal choice, or lack of suitable alternative properties.

⁶ Please note figures do not add to 100% as more than one response could be made.

⁷ Extra Care accommodation is housing which offers self-contained accommodation together with communal facilities and where care and support services are provided from a team based on site.

- The housing needs of younger people. Over the period 2011-2035 the population aged 20-29 (which tends to comprise new households forming) is forecast to reduce by 7.7% and that aged 30-44 (which tends to comprise the main economically active group) is forecast to fall by 5.2%. While this may in part be the result of wider demographic trends, such as a falling birth rate and older people living longer, younger people move away from Northumberland for education and work, and the lack of affordable housing, either to buy or rent, makes it difficult for them to return. There is currently a supported housing scheme for young homeless people in Morpeth, which has a number of properties within the MNP area.

Options

The provision of a range of property types, sizes and tenure in new build development would enable all households, and in particular younger and older people, to move to more appropriate properties. This would create secondary gains through making the best use of the existing housing stock by addressing under-occupation and promoting improvements in the rate of turnover of existing family units; a position which would be further enhanced if specialist accommodation to meet the changing requirements of the increasing older population was also provided.

If new build properties, and in particular those with 1 and 2 bedrooms, were built to the Lifetime Homes standard this would make them easier to adapt to meet the mobility needs of residents over time. By enabling older people to move to appropriately sized accommodation this would help to minimise under-occupation of the existing housing stock.

Issue 2 questions:

1. Should MNP endeavour to ensure that housing needs of younger and older people are met? Yes / No / No opinion
2. Should MNP promote provision of specialist accommodation for older people, such as sheltered and Extra Care housing? Yes / No / No opinion
3. Should MNP ensure that new build properties are built to the Lifetime Homes standard, so that they are flexible and adaptable for the future? Yes / No / No opinion

ISSUE 3: Location of new housing?

This report does not recommend detailed site specific answers to the housing needs of the MNP area, but provides a series of general options to present for public opinion. In selecting options, various sources of information and advice have been considered of which National, Regional, and local planning policy together with the NCC's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) are of paramount importance (please refer to Appendix 1 for a full list of information sources).

It is also assumed that all the settlements in the MNP area will be assessed in terms of the new green belt policy and broad housing strategy being drawn up in the NCC's Core Strategy. Therefore, in terms of housing location the MNP at this stage deals only with housing within and around settlements. The location of any housing outside the revised settlement boundaries is expected to be small scale and can be covered by national and/or NCC policy. This would be expected to be limited to rural exception housing⁸ (affordable/ social), essential rural workers' housing and barn conversions.

MORPETH TOWN: What land might be available?

The HTG has produced 13 Guiding Principles⁹, many of which are directly relevant to the location of new housing in the plan area. Early indications developed by this HTG are that Morpeth town may be required to accommodate between 1,250 and 1,950 additional houses in the 20 year period 2012-2032¹⁰. The most likely Base Case scenario is 1,500 houses. The MNP will need to identify substantial areas of land with housing development potential in the next 20 years in order to accommodate this range of scenarios.

The extant NCC SHLAA has been used to assess potential housing sites in the MNP area. The SHLAA is not a policy, but is merely a compendium of possible developable land, which informs NCC's obligation as local planning authority to keep a continuous 5 years plus supply of potential development land. In establishing SHLAAs the government was seeking to build in more certainty to the planning system for all stakeholders. The current SHLAA reveals that there are 83 possible housing sites in the Morpeth Town Council area, with several other potential large housing sites on the outskirts in the neighbouring Parishes of Hebron and Hepscott. Of the above, only 11 sites with a capacity of 10 houses or more are assessed in the SHLAA as "deliverable". Only 3 of these sites, at the Former Davidson's Garage in Castle Square, at Northgate Hospital (North) and at St George's Hospital (South) have had planning permission. An additional 4 large potential sites in the SHLAA are described as "uncertain".

⁸ Rural exception sites are defined in the NPPF as "small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

⁹ Refer Section C "Planning Policy Context" above

¹⁰ Refer to Issue 1 above

The majority of the 83 SHLAA sites in the Morpeth Town Council area are small, usually with a capacity of only one or two houses. In the current SHLAA, a total of only 29 sites within the Morpeth settlement boundary as laid down in the CMDLP are labelled “deliverable” and could provide 577 houses. However, events have overtaken the current SHLAA, which has a base date of 01/04/2010, as 2 sites included at Stobhill Club and The Kylins are now largely developed. In summary, there is potential in the current SHLAA for fewer than 500 houses on “deliverable” sites within the current settlement boundary of Morpeth. To meet the above housing supply target, it is necessary to consider sites outside the most recent local plan (CMDLP) designated town boundary.

In terms of location, the only currently available larger site in the central area of the town with development potential is the Former Davidson’s Garage land (69 houses / flats capacity). Therefore all other larger potential sites which could help to meet the town’s 20 year housing need are outside central Morpeth close to or beyond the edge of Morpeth. In the north of the town there is potential at St George’s Hospital, Northgate Hospital (but note also existing permission for 250 houses), Peacock Gap, Lancaster Park North, and Fairmoor North; to the south the SHLAA categorises Southgate Wood, Loansdean South, Stobhill South, Cottage Hospital and Merley Croft in the “deliverable” category. As a further consideration informing possible housing location, the MNP HTG has also been fully aware of the national and local planning policy emphasis on prioritising previously developed land (brownfield land), over greenfield land. In Morpeth, there is currently very limited brownfield land available for the possible scale of development likely to be needed in the next 20 years, as the following table of the 11 larger “deliverable” sites illustrates:

SHLAA Ref.	Site name	Brownfield	Greenfield	Inside current Morpeth town boundary in CMDLP	Total Housing potential
3397	St George’s Hospital (South) ¹¹	200		200	200
3079	Northgate Hospital ¹²	208	52		260
3497	Peacock Gap		43	43	43
3072	Lancaster Park North		444		444
3066	Fairmoor North		11		11
3023	Former Davidsons Garage	60		60	60
3290	Southgate Wood		69	69	69
3007	Loansdean South		235		235
3188	Stobhill South		364		364
3063	Cottage Hospital	27		27	27
3031	Merley Croft	29		29	29
	Total	524	1,218	428	1,742

¹¹ Because the distinction between Previously Developed Land (brownfield) and greenfield land can be difficult to interpret in planning policy and law, proportions are estimated for the St George’s Hospital site.

¹² As footnote 11, but for Northgate Hospital.

The table above of potential deliverable houses on brownfield sites still falls well short of the 20 year target range set out above, and therefore additional greenfield housing allocations are inevitable in the MNP. Furthermore, the revised SHLAA (expected Summer 2013) is likely to alter the potential development status of some sites, and may add further sites. This may affect the options for location of development, and in that event this report will be revised.

National planning policy continues to emphasise sustainability as a critical factor in land use planning and hence location of new development. In allocating sites in due course in the latter stages of the MNP it will be essential to measure each potential site against sustainability in terms of, for example: distance from services; availability of public transport; and any other factor that reduces the use of private cars. The issue of sustainability is complex in the town with no clear option, although it must be noted that the Inspector in the South Loansdean planning appeal case considered that, at 2 km from the town centre with a regular bus service, the site is sustainable. In addition, NCC recently granted planning permission (outline) for 250 houses at Northgate Hospital at 2.6 km from the town centre.

Although distance to services / the town centre is only one sustainability factor, these two applications suggest that all 11 sites assessed here are likely to be adjudged sustainable locations in terms of distance from services, although some are clearly more so than others.

The potential development of each of the 11 larger sites in the above table would have a different visual impact on local residents and the environment. Some sites are considerably more discrete than others. Similarly traffic generation is likely to impact more severely on some parts of the town than others. Flooding is a third major environmental issue affecting location. After the Issues and Options stage of the MNP and once Morpeth community consultation has taken place, before a detailed housing strategy is prepared and presented to the public at the Preferred Options stage, each potential site will be measured against a range of factors including those above to determine its suitability and viability for development. As a simple initial exercise, the following table summarises some of the factors for the 11 major sites identified, all of which are described as “deliverable” in the SHLAA.

SHLAA REF	LOCATION	PLANNING PERMISSION GRANTED	RECENT PLANNING PERMISSION LAPSED	BROWNFIELD /GREENFIELD	INSIDE SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY (CMDLP)	APPROX DISTANCE FROM TOWN CENTRE	ON A BUS ROUTE	STRONG VISUAL IMPACT	HOUSING UNITS
3397	St George's Hospital Phase 1		✓	BROWNFIELD	✓	1.3 KM			200
3079	Northgate Hospital	✓		MIXED		2.6 KM	✓	✓	260
3497	Peacock Gap			GREENFIELD	✓	0.8 KM	✓	✓	43
3072	Lancaster Park North			GREENFIELD		1.5 KM	✓	✓	444
3066	Fairmoor North			GREENFIELD		2.6 KM	✓		11
3023	Former Davidsons Garage	✓		BROWNFIELD	✓	0 KM	✓	✓	60
3290	Southgate Wood			GREENFIELD	✓	2 KM	✓		69
3007	Loansdean South			GREENFIELD		2 KM	✓	✓	235
3188	Stobhill South			GREENFIELD		1.5 KM	✓	✓	364
3063	Cottage Hospital			BROWNFIELD	✓	1.25 KM	✓		27
3031	Merley Croft			BROWNFIELD	✓	1.7 KM	✓		29

Several points are apparent from the above table:

- a) Only 5 of the 11 sites are partially or wholly brownfield, with potential for 576¹³ houses.
- b) Only 3 sites at St George's, Northgate and Former Davidson's Garage have extant or recent lapsed planning permissions; totalling 520 units.
- c) with the exception of Peacock Gap and Former Davidson's Garage, all sites are in excess of 1.2 km from the town centre, although all bar St George's are on a bus route.

The table illustrates that the sites with existing or recent planning permission can be prioritised as developable sites - namely St George's Hospital (Phase 1), Northgate Hospital grounds, and Former Davidson's garage, giving 520 potential houses. The table also suggests that Merley Croft and the Cottage Hospital sites would score highly in terms of these factors, giving another 56 houses. Finally Peacock Gap, although greenfield, falls within the settlement boundary and is by some distance the closest available site to the town centre and therefore should be the most sustainable location. If that site of 43 potential houses is added, a total 619 houses results.

The selection of other possible locations for housing in Morpeth is extremely complex and the following major factors have been identified by MNP HTG.

Other factors influencing location of housing in Morpeth

There are a number of additional factors which may influence this situation further and help to determine a locational strategy for housing in the MNP.

1. At present some 71% of the town's housing is south of the River Wansbeck, with Lancaster Park the only significant post-war development north of the river.
2. Local Plan policy in the CMDLP foresaw development potential north of the town because of the proposed MNB, plus redundant hospital land and buildings. This has also been recognised in the Lock Report commissioned by NCC and national Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to look into possible development strategies for the town, prior to progressing the bypass scheme. The involvement of the HCA is clearly logical because of the large area of land known to be available at the former St George's Hospital. NCC is also likely to promote a general development strategy for Morpeth including an inner green belt boundary and preferred strategic housing location through its Local Development Plan which will significantly influence the general location of future housing in the town. The Lock Report identified 5 development options for Morpeth assuming growth of 1,600 houses in the next 20 years (see Appendix 1 for link to the Lock Report for maps of each option). Please note however that not all land identified for housing in the Lock Report is in the current SHLAA, and that the analysis was used to present the case in favour of the MNB:
 - Option A - St George's wider site

¹³ 524 on brownfield per prior table, plus 52 Northgate Hospital greenfield element

- Option B - St George's and Northgate
 - Option C - St George's and Lancaster Park North
 - Option D - St George's and Peacock Gap
 - Option E - St George's and South Morpeth
3. The Morpeth Northern Bypass (MNB), if approved, is expected to be constructed by end 2016. This will increase accessibility in the northern area of the town, and is likely to increase the development potential not only at St George's Hospital, but also at and around Northgate Hospital and some privately owned land in the vicinity.
 4. A development proposal for up to 300 houses is imminent at St George's Hospital South (Phase 1), and is not dependent on the proposed MNB. The HCA see this as a forerunner to a potential scheme for an additional major housing release of up to 500 houses (Phase 2) and possibly more on the hospital land which would largely be dependent on accessibility to the proposed MNB, amongst other factors.
 5. There is an on-going application and appeal at Loansdean South. The outcome of this will be extremely important in many respects, including the status of current and emerging planning policy for Morpeth; the supply of developable housing land in the town i.e. possible alternative site availability, and the greenfield / brownfield discussion.
 6. There are major infrastructure problems in the town mainly in terms of sewerage capacity, although a planned extension to the sewage works will be able to accommodate an additional 700 houses. Construction is due to start in April 2013 and be in operation 18 months later. Further information and detail on this will be needed after the Issues and Options consultation to inform final possible site selection.
 7. The MNP HTG is aware that there is a strong local lobby which wants to see Pegswood develop (discussed below). This could affect Morpeth housing numbers with potential sites in Pegswood absorbing some local demand for both Morpeth and Pegswood.
 8. Finally, within the MNP preparation there may be competition for scarce land for different uses such as employment as opposed to housing (e.g. Fairmoor). This factor may affect the ability to allocate some sites for housing, and will need to be considered after the Issues and Options community consultation.

MORPETH SUMMARY

The above discussion demonstrates that the options for the location of a 20 year supply of 1500 houses in the town are limited. As a result of policies in the CMDLP; land availability; increasing likelihood of the implementation of the MNB; and refusals of planning applications on greenfield sites in the south of the town, there appears to be considerably more potential to concentrate possible future development on sites to the north. This would place particular emphasis on the two hospitals, where there is known to be significant areas of land available, and which also benefit from existing or recent planning permissions. This general suggestion is advocated as a possible question (Q2.) to the public at the end of Issue 3 below. It should also be noted that a much more detailed and scored appraisal of each potential housing site should be carried out at a later stage of the plan, fully taking into account our HTG Guiding Principles.

It is not expected that the revised SHLAA will radically alter the status of the major sites under consideration here. However, the strategy will clearly be affected if the bypass does not proceed, and may also be affected by the outcome of the Loansdean South application / appeal. The commentary above illustrates that sites at St George's Phase 1, Northgate and Former Davidson's Garage will deliver 520 housing units. It is suggested from the basic analysis above that at this stage it would be logical to consider adding Merley Croft, and the Cottage Hospital to this, both of which are brownfield and more sustainable in some respects than other sites as definite allocations. This would leave a shortfall of some 924 dwellings. The outcome of the South Loansdean situation will be instrumental in firming up other site allocations, but it is also the case that the long term strategy of both the former CMBC and NCC, which is now being pursued (it is understood) by the major landowner the HCA, to concentrate development around the MNB, should be taken into account. At this stage of MNP preparation the HTG considers it logical to ask general questions about location and brownfield land.

Additionally, Pegswood Parish Council has made representations to NCC that Pegswood should be viewed as a Service Centre in the Core Strategy, and that there is a desire for housing growth in the village. This has stimulated further discussion in the HTG over the possibility that Pegswood could absorb some housing growth intended for Morpeth. A question is proposed to that effect.

The questions below are suggestions for consideration by the HTG as a starting point for eventual questions to the community in the Issues and Options consultation. In the coming weeks / months when a revised SHLAA and 5 years housing land supply figures are released by NCC; the outcome of the Loansdean South appeal and new application are known; the HCA lodge an application; and the MNB decision is finalised - we should be in a better position to suggest more detailed locational questions.

THE OUTLYING PARISHES OF PEGSWOOD, HEBRON, HEPSCOTT AND MITFORD

Excluding Morpeth town and larger potential housing sites on the edge of the town which are within Hebron and Hepscott parishes, and possibly Pegswood (see below) the potential for housing elsewhere in the 5 Parishes is relatively small scale, and could be expected to be concentrated primarily within each village, or outside in the form of possible edge of settlement rural exception housing, barn conversions or agricultural or other rural workers dwellings, although this will be subject to green belt policy. None of the 4 outlying villages are defined in Policy 2 of the NCC Core Strategy Preferred Options document as Main Towns or Service Centres, and consequently the following draft policy is applicable:

“In other settlements development will be allowed elsewhere which:

- (a) is of an appropriate scale for the size of the settlement;
- (b) maintains or enhances local services and facilities, including those outside the particular settlement in which the proposed development will be located;
- (c) meets defined needs;
- (d) protects the countryside from widespread new development”

PEGSWOOD PARISH

One of the 13 Guiding Principles prepared by the MNP HTG advocates “Further development of Pegswood to enhance community life, with housing development sufficient to strengthen its position as a centre for local services”.

The village currently has a varied housing mix, which is separated into a series of estates with their own character. A development of 79 houses has recently been developed at Welbeck Terrace utilising the remaining significant site available in the village. Pegswood is surrounded by open countryside, but is constrained to the south by the East Coast main railway line, a country park to the north-west, so main development opportunities appear to be to the north. The present SHLAA identifies 6 deliverable housing sites in the village of which 4 are seen as developable within 6-10 years. A site at East Farm and 2 to the north of the village provide potential for 91 houses.

Policy 2 of the Core Strategy, above, seeks to restrict most development in the County to the main towns or service centres, and therefore Pegswood, as the policy stands, could only be permitted very limited housing development. Nevertheless the Parish Council considers that to maintain and enhance Pegswood there is a need for growth including new housing.

In addition, the question has been raised through the MNP HTG about the possibility of Pegswood absorbing some of the intended housing growth for Morpeth, and that the MNP area should be treated as an entity in the emerging Local Development Plan rather than a series of separate settlements. The Parish Council has made representations to NCC to this effect. It is also important to ensure that Pegswood does not coalesce with Morpeth.

In the event that NCC is prepared to alter the status of Pegswood to a service centre then housing growth in excess of the SHLAA potential 91 houses might be possible. Because Pegswood usually has housing available for sale at market prices below £100,000, an additional rural exceptions policy is not thought to be needed for this village. At present only the sites north of the village are available for significant development. The MNP HTG is aware that any further housing in Pegswood would be constrained by the current capacity of the local sewage treatment works.

HEBRON, HEPSCOTT AND MITFORD PARISHES

The 3 Parishes are all predominantly rural with each focused on attractive small villages with very limited services. As such the villages are not sustainable locations for housing growth, and have historically been constrained by tight settlement boundaries in development plans. Hebron Parish includes the outer reaches of Morpeth town and several large potential housing sites at Northgate Hospital, and Lancaster Park North fall within the Parish. These sites are associated with Morpeth town settlement rather than Hebron. Similarly the large potential housing site (SHLAA 3188) at Stobhill South, immediately south of Morpeth relates to the town rather than Hepscoth village. All the villages are likely to be wrapped around, or washed over, by the new Green Belt designation being prepared by NCC which will protect their character and avoid coalescence with Morpeth.

None of the villages has a deliverable SHLAA site of any magnitude, with any recent or extant planning permissions primarily for individual houses.

Housing in the villages has in recent years been increasingly dominated by commuters, and consequently house prices are above average. Therefore, there is a need in each case for affordable housing.

Issue 3 questions:

1. Do you agree that the MNP should prioritise previously developed land (brownfield) and deliverable and developable sites within NCC's SHLAA for development?

Yes / No / No opinion

2. Do you consider that future significant housing development in Morpeth should be concentrated primarily to the north of the town in and around the St George's and Northgate Hospital sites and the proposed Morpeth Northern Bypass?

Yes / No / If No, please make other suggestion

3. Would you like to see housing sites in Pegswood included as part of Morpeth's future housing allocation to help Pegswood develop and to diversify locations in the MNP area?

Yes / No / No opinion

4. Do you think that Pegswood should be subject to significant new housing development?

Yes / No / No opinion

5. Do you agree that any expansion of Pegswood should be north of the village?

Yes / No / No opinion / Other suggestions

6. Do you agree that the location of new housing in Hebron, Hepscott, and Mitford Parishes should be only small scale infill or conversions within established settlement boundaries?

Yes / No / No opinion / Other suggestions

7. Do you think that land should be allocated, including land outside the current village boundaries, for possible edge of village rural exception housing in Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford, for social / affordable schemes?

Hebron Yes / No / No opinion

Hepscott Yes / No / No opinion

Mitford Yes / No / No opinion

ISSUE 4: Type, size and tenure of housing?

The NPPF makes it clear that authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. The intention is to help to 'balance' the housing market and so new development should meet gaps in the current stock and create secondary gains by improving turnover in both the private and social sectors. Future needs may also be influenced by new government policies.

The Northumberland county wide Housing Needs Survey shows that there is a need for properties of various types, sizes and tenures in the former CMBC and Tynedale District areas. It recommended future property size requirements by tenure as follows:

Tenure	Property Size			
	1 bedroom ¹⁴	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4+ bedrooms
Market Housing	60%		40%	
Affordable Housing: Intermediate (30%)	25%	70%	5%	0%
Affordable Housing: Social Rented (70%)	45%	30%	25%	0%

Source: Northumberland County Wide Housing Needs Survey, Final Report 2012

Options

The MNP could allow the market to dictate what is provided on the basis of what sells best. It is considered that this 'do nothing' option would not help to promote housing choice, nor be most effective at filling in gaps in the current supply.

The MNP could specify percentages for size, type and tenure, for example such as those set out above, although these will change over the life of the MNP and even from one location to another, and so would have to be regularly reviewed and could only ever be indicative.

The MNP could include an 'enabling' policy, which requires a range of provision in terms of type, size and tenure, which would be determined on a scheme by scheme basis.

Issue 4 questions:

1. Should the MNP encourage a range of property type, size and tenure? Yes / No
2. If yes, should this be by setting specific requirements, or by having an enabling policy?

¹⁴ Please cross refer to Issue 2 (pages 12-14) on specific needs identified re 1 & 2 bedroom properties.

ISSUE 5: How can affordability be delivered?

In order to gauge if it is easy or not for lower income households to buy a property in a similar price band to their income, lower quartile incomes in an area are compared with lower quartile house prices, to obtain a ratio. The lower quartile is the number that divides the lower half of the data into two equal halves. If this ratio is around 3:1 or 3.5:1 then generally it is considered that owner-occupation is affordable, while at ratios of 5:1 and above access to owner occupation is likely to be problematic. In 2008 the ratio for Castle Morpeth was 7:1, with that for Northumberland being 6:1. With the lower quartile house price for Castle Morpeth being £110,000 in 2009, this suggests a household income of at least £22,000 being required to meet the ratio of 5:1, and up to around £36,500 to meet the 'affordable' ratio of 3:1.

Options

While house prices have reduced from their 2007 peak, they are still unaffordable for many people looking to buy within the MNP area. The operation of the housing market will not resolve this without planning intervention and so affordable housing needs to be considered as an integral part of the delivery of any new housing schemes in the MNP area. To do nothing is not considered to be an option.

One of the most common ways of delivering affordable housing currently is on 'mixed tenure' developments where, in addition to market housing, affordable housing is also provided by the developer. The subsidy required by the affordable housing is in essence provided from the sale of the market housing. Based upon work carried out by NCC, 30% affordable housing should be able to be delivered in the highest value areas of the county, such as Morpeth town, particularly on Greenfield sites where development costs are lower. In other areas, such as Pegswood, grant may be required. The grant is managed by the HCA, limited and subject to a competitive bidding process.

NCC has recently been consulting on their 'Core Strategy Preferred Options'. With regard to affordable housing they are currently proposing that 'All open market residential development proposals will be expected to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing. The overall Northumberland target of affordable housing is 30% of all new homes' (Policy 8). NCC is currently carrying out work to determine the affordable housing targets at a more local level and so the eventual target for the MNP area, or for parts of the area, could change in future versions of this report. The affordable housing provided will be subject to a local housing needs assessment and the overall viability of the scheme, while the priority will be for on-site provision. If, exceptionally, off-site provision is agreed, then a 'cascade' mechanism is proposed to determine where the affordable housing should be provided.

Most affordable housing is now provided by housing associations, or other registered providers of social housing, such as ISOS and Johnnie Johnson Housing locally, and local authorities. However, there may be opportunities for non-profit making, community-based organisations to be involved, such as 'community land trusts'. Such organisations are able to develop affordable housing that meets the needs of the community, and is owned and controlled by the community, while ensuring that it is available in perpetuity to local people who cannot afford open market housing.

Some developers now have their own affordable housing products, often based upon a discount from the open-market value of the property. Such discounted prices will have to be assessed to confirm that they are affordable to local people, and their affordability would have to be secured through a legal agreement to ensure that the properties remain affordable over time. This can also be assisted by the removal of permitted development rights, so that the affordable properties cannot be extended without planning consent.

Issue 5 questions:

1. Do you support the current affordable housing target of 30%, with the priority that it is provided on site, with all development proposals expected to contribute towards the provision of affordable housing?

Yes / No

2. Would you support the involvement of local non-profit making, community-based organisations, such as 'community land trusts', in the ownership and/or management of affordable housing?

Yes / No

ISSUE 6: How can quality design and local distinctiveness be delivered?

Morpeth and Pegswood have experienced post war growth mainly delivered by standard developer designed estates, which do little to reflect local design and materials. Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford, each of which has an attractive historic built core, have tended to develop with incremental small scale developments of standard house types, which do little to echo traditional local building quality. The result in the case of the 5 settlements is a mish-mash of styles which, although providing some variety within each place, lack distinction. The new estates in the two larger settlements have often been laid out with hard edges which do little to integrate them with the surrounding landscape and countryside. Within the 3 other villages, new development has tended to be more sensitively laid out to respect local landscape, assisted by a high proportion of low density and single storey houses, which facilitates the retention and addition of considerable additional tree, hedge and other planting.

Within Morpeth, the town centre conservation area and retention of many listed and historic traditional buildings has largely preserved the character of the historic core, with more sympathetic infill development assisting this to some extent.

For outside settlements in the surrounding countryside, design has generally been of a higher standard, probably assisted by more stringent planning policies guiding rural design. For example new farmhouses and buildings have tended to be erected using vernacular materials, and barn conversions have generally preserved local traditional design and materials.

As discussed in Issue 3 (Location of New Housing), there is little available brownfield land in Morpeth or Pegswood, and therefore it is inevitable that most future house building will be at the extremities of each place. Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford are not sustainable settlements in the modern sense, and therefore any new housing development is likely to be small scale infill, so will have only very limited impact on the character or appearance of the villages.

The NPPF comments that design is not solely about appearance or location, but must also provide a sustainable quality of life in terms of energy efficiency and affordability. To assist this aim the national publication Code for Sustainable Homes lays down standards for high quality sustainable housing. There are many other laudable publications such as “Good Design – It All Adds Up” (2012) by Royal Institute of British Architects, and “Sustainable Design and Construction” (Aug 2012) – an excellent cross sector document by various institutions including Royal Town Planning Institute, Building Research Establishment, and Landscape Institute. It is also important to consider that high quality design is not necessarily synonymous with extra cost, and can often be secured within a developer’s viability constraints.

In addition, to assist the preparation of the MNP, The Design Council (CABE) have run a series of workshops to guide MNP volunteers and in 2012 produced “Building for Life” which gives advice on housing design quality. Finally, in looking at housing design and layout, consideration should be given not only to individual house design but also the provision of landscaping and street layout including accessibility, appearance and public spaces.

Issue 6 question:

1. Do you agree that the MNP should introduce design policies to ensure a high quality of housing development, to encompass buildings, street scenes, and landscape quality?

Yes / No / No opinion

ISSUE 7: How can we make more effective use of existing housing stock?

The vast majority of the housing which will be in the MNP area in 20 years' time exists today. It is therefore important to ensure it is used effectively and so help to meet housing need.

Options

- Housing conditions. Private sector stock conditions are, along with other tenure types, typically assessed against 'Decent Homes Standards' as a means of identifying those housing units that would need investment in order to bring them up to the nationally agreed minimum standard. There are 4 elements to the Decent Homes Standards – whether there is inadequate thermal comfort; whether there are any 'Category 1' hazards, which could relate to, say, damp, mould growth or falls on stairs; whether a property is in a state of disrepair; and whether there are 'non-modern' facilities. The position in 2009 was:

Area	% non-Decent	% with inadequate thermal comfort	% with a Category 1 hazard	% in disrepair	% with non-modern facilities
Castle Morpeth	37	16	26	9	1
Northumberland	41	18	29	10	1

While the Castle Morpeth picture is better than the county average, the problems present are likely to be concentrated within the older housing stock of the MNP area, where some of the poorest residents will live. Some assistance is available from NCC for loans to certain households to improve housing conditions, and they work with Northumberland Warmzone to improve the energy efficiency of properties.

- Private rented sector. Nationally the private rented sector includes some of the poorest housing conditions, and for this reason NCC run a 'Scheme of Landlord Accreditation', where accredited landlords are required to meet certain property and management standards.
- Empty homes are a wasted resource and can have a blighting effect on neighbouring properties and the adjoining area. The County Council have an Empty Homes Strategy and take action to bring empty homes back into use. The position regarding homes which had been vacant for more than 6 months as at March 2012 was as follows:

Area (Enumeration District)	Number	% vacant
Morpeth Kirkehill	0	0
Morpeth Stobhill	13	0.7
Morpeth North	25	1.2
Ulgham	34	1.4
Pegswood	29	1.5
County	2161	1.6

While the numbers are not great, encouraging owners to improve and bring back into use an empty home could help to meet housing need and improve the area. The conversion of an appropriate property, not currently used for residential purposes, where there is no longer a demand for that use (eg. a retail property or former storage over a shop) could provide residential accommodation in a sustainable location.

Issue 7 question:

1. Should the MNP encourage and promote the effective use and improvement of the existing stock?

Yes / No / No opinion

ISSUE 8: Gypsies and Travellers

There is no authorised site for Gypsies and Travellers in the MNP area, and there is not a history of unauthorised sites. The Northumberland Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment does not identify the need for any pitches to be provided in the MNP area in the period up to 2016. Therefore, it is not proposed that any sites will be identified.

In their Core Strategy Preferred Options NCC is proposing a criterion based policy for the identification of both transit and permanent sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople, based upon needs identified in future versions of the Accommodation Assessment.

Issue 8 question:

1. Do you agree that at present it is unnecessary to identify any permanent or transit sites for gypsies and travellers in the MNP area?

Yes / No / No opinion

APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION SOURCES / HOUSING TOPIC GROUP

Documents, Agencies, & Individuals consulted to inform / provide evidence for MNP process.

- Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (CMDLP) 1991-2006 (adopted Feb 2003)
- CMBC “People and Planning 5 year Housing Land Supply 2011-2016”
- Communities and Local Government, Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning
- David Lock Associates “Sustainable Growth Scenarios for Morpeth” (Aug 2011)
<http://www.themorpethneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/wp-content/themes/morpeth/documents/county-council/Sustainable-Growth.pdf>
- DCLG Plain English Guide to the Localism Act (Nov 2011)
- Local Transport Strategy 2011-2026 (Appendix A)
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly sustainable development
- Newcastle University, MNP Infrastructure Audit (Jan 2013)
- NCC Best and Final Bid for central government funding
- NCC Northumberland Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation document
- NCC Northumberland Core Strategy (Preferred Options stage)
- NCC Northumberland Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)
- NCC Northumberland Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)
- NCC Northumberland Housing Needs Survey
- Northumberland Infonet
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) Census 2011
- Office for National Statistics (ONS) Sub-National Population Projections 2012
- Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)
- URS report “Outline Water Cycle Study” prepared for NCC (May 2012)

- Colin Haylock, Built Environment expert, CABE - 3 public “MNP Visioning Workshops”
- Tom Johnston, Glendale Community Development Trust
- Peter Jordan, Chairman of the National Housebuilders’ Federation
- Lewis Rimington, Localism Officer, ISOS Housing
- Charles Robinson, Chartered Surveyor and Morpeth-based Rickards Estate Agent
- Alan Sears, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)