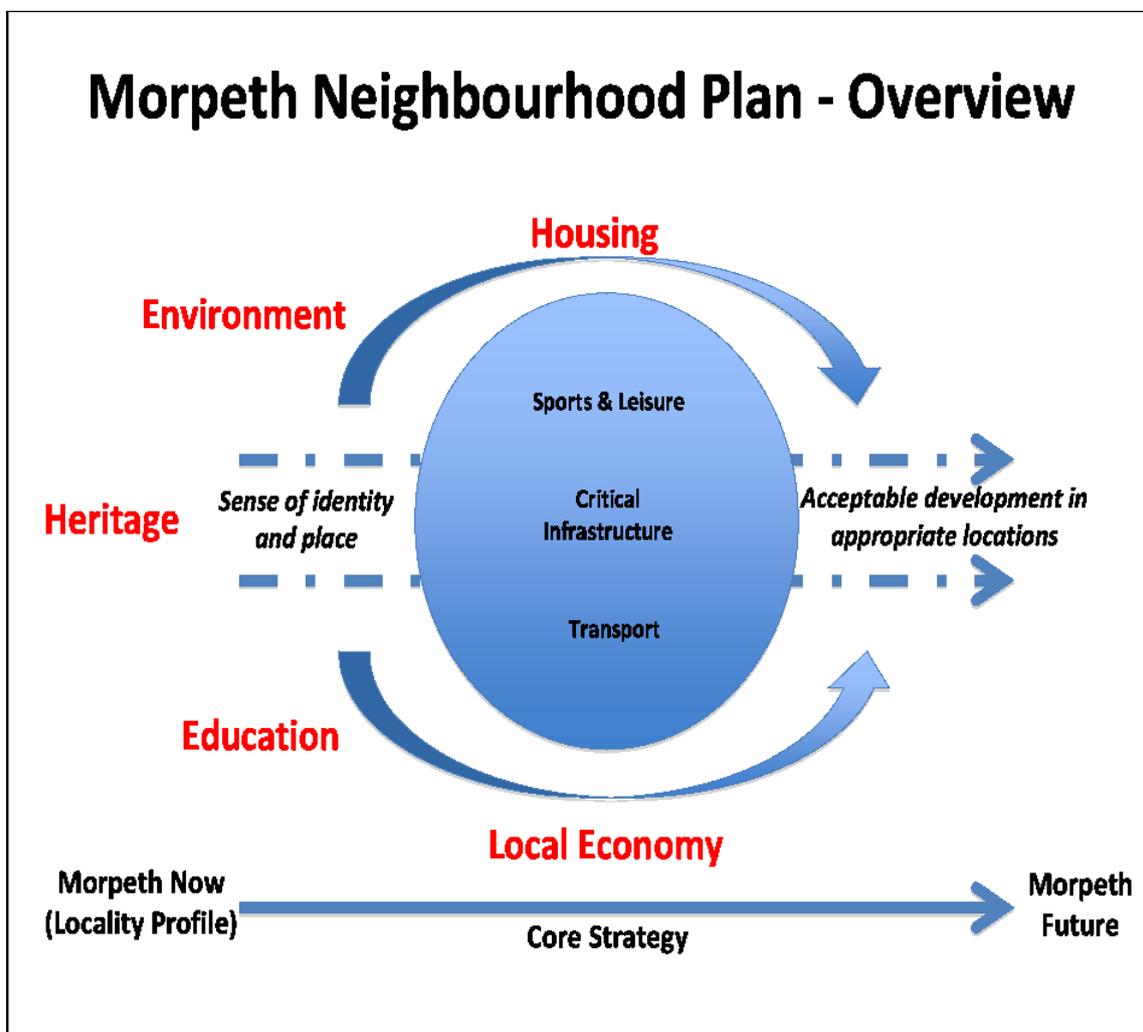


Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan - Overview



Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan (MNP)

Issues & Options Technical Paper

Economy Topic Group (ETG)

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1. Background and Economic Context

1.1 Settlements

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, Hepscott, Mitford** and **Pegswood** because of their strong functional relationship with Morpeth in terms of local services, retail offer, education and employment.

Economy 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 Housing: with additional cross cutting themes considering Infrastructure, Sports & Leisure, and Transport.

Morpeth lies 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne and has a population of around 14,000. 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. Morpeth has expanded onto the plateau land to the north and south of the town in the post-war period 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, set in a wooded valley and surrounded by open countryside. It acts as a rural service centre with an extensive hinterland to the north and west of the town. There is a well established industrial estate at Coopies Lane on the south side of the town. It is also an administrative centre with County Hall acting as the main offices of Northumberland County Council, a newly formed single tier unitary authority in 2009. 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. Equally as a historic market town it is recognised that heritage can potentially be a driver for the local and visitor economy. Morpeth experienced significant flooding in 2008 and again in 2012, but major works to reduce flood risk in the town centre is currently being implemented.



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. The village has a small industrial estate on the edge of the

settlement and a new Community Fire Station, serving Pegswood, Ashington and Morpeth immediately adjacent to the new Pegswood Bypass.

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.

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.

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.

1.2 Location and Transport Infrastructure

Morpeth's location enables good connectivity with South East Northumberland, the Tyneside conurbation, and North Northumberland (and thence to Scotland).

The A1 Morpeth Bypass lies to the west of the town with connecting junctions to the south and north of the town at Clifton and Fairmoor respectively; this provides access to Tyneside to the south and North Northumberland / Scotland to the north. The A192 provides access to Bedlington and Cramlington to the south of the town; the A197 provides access to Pegswood and Ashington to the east and the former Rural Coalfield and Northumberland Coast to the north east.

Since the development of the A1 Morpeth Bypass in 1970 traffic volumes in Morpeth town centre have continued to grow and as a result of this a Morpeth Northern Bypass is proposed – part of the South East Northumberland Strategic Link Road that improves connectivity between South East Northumberland and the A1. Phase 1 of this road – the Pegswood Bypass has already been developed, reducing the impact of through traffic on this village.



Funding for this is in place and subject to all the necessary regulatory approvals being secured the road should be completed by the end of 2015. Once the new road is open it will:

- Complete a strategic link along the northern perimeter of South East Northumberland
- Contribute to the relief of traffic congestion in Morpeth
- Improve accessibility to the A1 in all directions by improving the interchange with the A1 to the north of Morpeth
- Facilitate and provide access to a proposed development on the St George's Hospital site
- Potentially be instrumental in providing access to the King Edward VI High School site, reducing congestion at the present access in the town
- Improve access, particularly from the A1 to a proposed Business Park development at Northgate Hospital / Fairmoor.

Morpeth has a rail station on the East Coast Main Line and has local rail services to Tyneside and national services to London and Scotland as well as cross-country services/connections to Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham. Service improvements in recent years have contributed to increasing rail patronage, resulting in increased car parking being provided at the station.

Newcastle Airport is situated some ten miles to the south west of Morpeth.

1.3 Travel to work patterns

Travel to Work data from the 2001 Census indicates that there were approximately 136,000 Northumberland residents in employment, of which 91,270 had jobs based within the County, yielding a 'containment rate' of 67%.

The data also shows that the remaining 44,730 residents commuted to jobs beyond the County boundary. This outflow of workers is counterbalanced, in part by a daily inflow of residents from other authorities travelling in to Northumberland to work. However, the inflow is estimated at just 16,280 resulting in a net outflow of 28,460 workers.

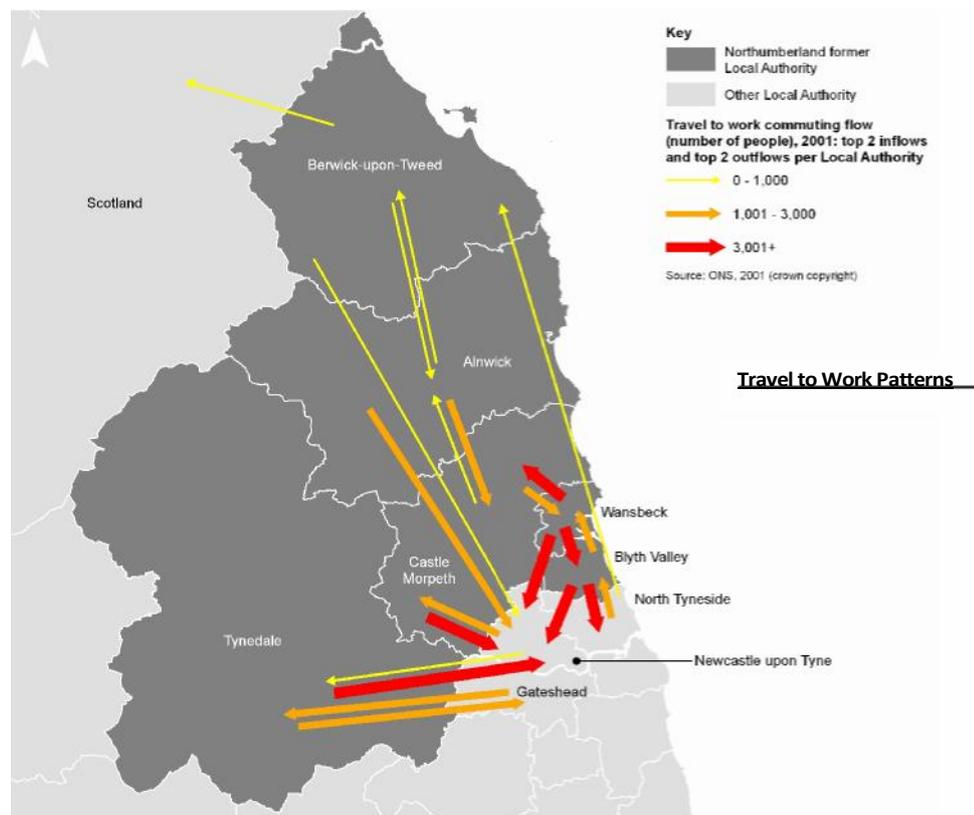
The map above provides a summary of the key inflows and outflows to the former districts of Northumberland. This demonstrates that the Tyne and Wear conurbation is a major driver of the net outflow of workers experienced by the County

The 2001 data discussed above represents the most comprehensive dataset available regarding travel to work patterns, this clearly highlights the strong exit from Morpeth to the City Region and supports the classification of Morpeth as a dormitory town.

1.4 Locality Profile

The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Area that includes the adjoining parishes of Pegswood, Mitford, Hepscott and Hebron had a resident population of 19,540 in 2011 (ONS); Morpeth itself had a population of 14,000.

The Plan Area had an economic activity rate of 66.83%; 3.72% of the economically active age group (all usual residents aged 16-74) were unemployed; 20.5 % of that group were retired and 4.54 were long term sick or disabled.

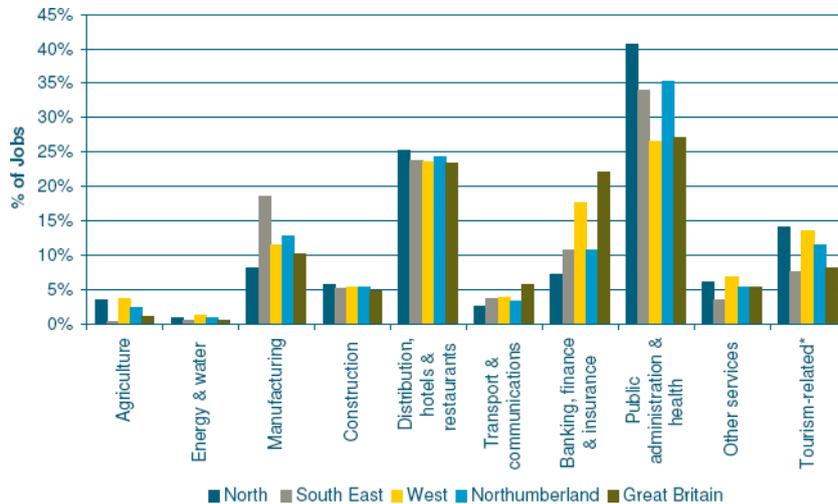


Of those in employment 18.2% were in health and social work activities; 13.48% in wholesale and retail trade; 12.45% in education; 10.39% in public administration; 6.67% were in manufacturing and 6.57% in professional, scientific and technical activities.

Putting this in a wider geographical context the number of employee jobs in Northumberland which stood at 103,400 in 2008 has risen by a modest 1.7% over the previous 10 years – a relatively modest rate of growth compared to the national picture.

Levels of self-employment in the county rose from 8.1% in June 2005 to 9.2% in June 2010, a slightly higher growth rate than the regional picture.

Between 1997 and 2007 the number of VAT registered businesses in Northumberland increased by approximately 19% to 9,425 – broadly in line with the regional and national picture. The growth in Northumberland’s stock of VAT registered businesses has been underpinned by above average survival rates.



Jobs by Sector in Northumberland (2008) Source: Annual Business Inquiry

Northumberland has a slightly higher proportion of small businesses and a lower proportion of larger businesses than the North East and national averages.

Beyond the statistics the Economy Topic Group has identified Morpeth’s “**strengths**” as

- a rural service centre;
- a centre of public administration (County Hall, headquarters of Northumberland County Council has around 1,000 employees);
- Piramal Healthcare, a major pharmaceutical manufacturer located just outside Morpeth and employing over 300 people
- a town centre with a vibrant retail sector – a strong mix of independents and national multiples, reflected by the recent redevelopment of Sanderson’s Arcade and the current development of a new Morrison’s supermarket at an edge of centre location; an opportunity for an additional food retailer will be created by Morrison’s relocation from their present store
- a town centre with a mix of local / heritage attraction, the principal attraction being Carlisle Park with its riverside setting contributing to healthy day visitor economy; there is also a strong programme of annual events including the Morpeth Gathering, Town Fair as well as the weekly Wednesday market and monthly Farmers market that add to the range of visitor attractions
- a well established Industrial Estate at Coopies Lane accommodating largely local traders, wholesalers and automotive businesses

Equally there are some acknowledged “**weaknesses**” in the local economy that need to be addressed

- Although a historic market town with a range of smaller attractions there are no major visitor attractions (for example in comparison to Alnwick and Hexham)

- Whilst the number of empty premises in the town centre is relatively limited (particularly in comparison with many similar sized town centres) there are currently a number of boarded up properties on key approaches to the town centre, and the Queens Head Hotel is currently for sale and boarded up
- Limited parking provision and traffic congestion is perceived as having an adverse impact on the town centre economy
- The range of visitor accommodation is relatively limited
- There are limited bulky goods retailers and limited scope to develop any such retail park within the town centre or edge of centre location
- There are no large scale sites on Coopies Lane that are capable of attracting major inward investments. Additionally there are less development bodies and funding streams to support interventions in the local economy to help realise new developments
- The County Council has experienced significant job losses in recent years and ongoing reductions in public sector funding would suggest that this loss of employment will continue

And “opportunities” that are waiting to be realised:

- There are allocated employment sites available and the development of the Morpeth Northern Bypass and the creation of a new A1 junction improve will improve their attractiveness to the market. As a commercial location Morpeth is considered to have considerable potential for strong employment growth in the right economic climate due to its accessibility to the Tyne and Wear conurbation and its attractive surroundings
- By virtue of its location Morpeth has the potential to act as a “hub” to a wide range of visitor attractions across Northumberland and within Tyneside (this “Vision” being articulated within the recently prepared Market Town Welcome report)
- There are a significant range of redevelopment opportunities in the town centre that could strengthen the range of visitor attractions, leisure facilities, business accommodation and residential opportunities.
- Pegswood Parish Council has ambitions for growth and an emerging masterplan that outlines proposed growth patterns
- The Town Team, formed under the auspices of Greater Morpeth Development Trust on the back of a Portas bid, has been established to develop a strategic vision for the town and adopt a coordinated approach to the development of the town centre

A similar range of issues and concerns arose from the feedback received at the **Neighbourhood Plan Launch Event programme** held in October 2012.

Town Centre / Retail offer:

- The wide range of independent stores (Rutherford’s Department Store; Smail’s traditional hardware store; Cheese Shop etc.) was part of Morpeth’s attraction
- The redevelopment of Sanderson’s Arcade was generally supported (particularly the multiples it had attracted to the town) but there was some concern that the stores were too up-market for local people and took footfall away from some parts of the town, particularly Newgate Street
- Concern expressed about empty shops/ charity shops and perceived lack of bulky goods offer within Morpeth

Parking and Traffic Management

- Concerns expressed around charging policy; enforcement of traffic regulations; lack of long stay parking; and traffic congestion / introduction of traffic lights at Telford Bridge junction

Visitor and Business Accommodation

- Need for better range of bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation within the town
- Need for a better range of business accommodation to attract small and medium sized enterprises
- Redundant buildings in rural areas with redevelopment potential (similar to Milkhope Centre)

Pegswood

- Better range and quality of local shops
- Lack of, and cost of, public transport
- More businesses attracted to Pegswood Industrial Estate

2. Planning Context – the NPPF and Northumberland Core Strategy

Although a community-led plan the Neighbourhood Plan needs to have regard to national planning guidance and in general conformity with the local planning authority's strategic planning guidance. The Government's planning policies for England are now set out in the **National Planning Policy Framework(NPPF)**. The Framework advises that neighbourhood plans should plan positively to support local development. One of the core planning principles is that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. ***Significant weight should be given to the need to support economic growth through the planning system.***

The Framework advises that plans should include policies to support the viability and vitality of town centres; there remains a broad presumption that main town centre uses should be accommodated in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites and not available should out of centre sites be considered.

Planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development.

Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan. To facilitate this, local planning authorities (LPAs) should prepare and ensure that an up to date Local Plan is in place as quickly as possible. Northumberland County Council, as LPA for the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan area, is currently preparing its **Local Development Plan Core Strategy** and published its Preferred Options Consultation Report in February 2013 (hereafter referred to simply as the "Core Strategy"). There remain saved policies from previously adopted local plans, including the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan, but these will lapse when the Core Strategy is adopted and now only have weight where they are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

(The Core Strategy approach and policy framework set out below is not yet adopted policy but represents the current thinking of the LPA and the likely strategic framework with which the Morpeth neighbourhood Plan has to be in general conformity)

Objective 2 of the Core Strategy seeks to provide an appropriate supply of employment space to meet objectively assessed needs. This will assist delivery of Objective 4 which aims to facilitate investment and employment growth in a resilient and strong economy. ***A positive policy approach to economic development which includes providing the right amount of land in the right locations will assist the delivery of these objectives.*** Further work is currently being undertaken to identify an appropriate employment land supply and distribution across the county.

Although the Core Strategy recognises that whilst the county's main town centres and established business parks, such as Morpeth Coopies Lane Industrial Estate, are the main economic drivers, a great many businesses operate from smaller settlements, within the countryside and from home. There is a need for a balanced spatial approach to economic development allowing for growth and diversification of the rural economy, whilst protecting the environment and local communities.

The preferred policy approach within the Core Strategy recognises that market towns are drivers for the rural economy, providing services, a local market, and location for larger scale employment activities. It also supports economic growth in the hinterland of these towns and the wider rural area. This is largely the approach that will apply in the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan Area.

To promote the growth and diversification of the rural economy, proposals which enable the development of new economic activity and the expansion of existing businesses outside the main towns and service centres will also be supported in most circumstances (subject to a criteria based policy).

The provision of workspace for a home run business through the conversion of part of a dwelling, out-buildings, or development of appropriately scaled new buildings within the dwelling's curtilage will be supported, provided there is no significant adverse impact on adjacent residential properties.

To balance rural economic development with maintaining the character, diversity and tranquillity of Northumberland's rural environment, all development must be appropriate in scale, character and design to its setting and should not conflict with any of the Core Strategy's landscape, heritage, and biodiversity policies.

To support a growing, sustainable tourism sector, development of new visitor attractions and facilities, accommodation, and the expansion of existing tourism businesses will be supported (subject to a criteria based policy) with priority being given to new tourism development in main towns such as Morpeth.

Developments that enhance the environment or bring disused heritage assets back into appropriate economic use will be particularly supported.

The Core Strategy identifies Morpeth as a main settlement within the county's hierarchy of centres. The continuing role, vitality, viability and competitiveness of Northumberland's Town and District Centres, including Morpeth will be supported, with a view to maintaining or increasing the percentage of local spending retained in these centres.

The Core Strategy follows a "town centre first" approach. Main town centre uses should be located within Town Centre and District Centre boundaries unless there are strong planning reasons to locate them elsewhere or unless they are office uses that otherwise meet Policy 21.

The following will be subject to sequential and impact testing:

- a. Proposals for more than 1000m² net retail floor space beyond Primary Shopping Area or District Centre boundaries;
- b. Proposals for leisure-related buildings of 2500m² gross floor space, (not linked with wider open space activities or hotel use), that are beyond Town Centre or District Centre boundaries; and
- c. Proposals for office uses that are either more than 2500m² gross floor space beyond Town Centre and District Centre boundaries or more than 500 metres from a public transport interchange

The Core Strategy recognises the potential for a range of leisure uses integrated within the retail offer of Northumberland Town and District centres. The Council will support proposals for non-retail uses on primary shopping frontages.

Large scale leisure facilities that provide an additional attraction for tourists will also be encouraged if they are in scale with and physically capable of accommodation.

3. The Plan's Economic Objectives

Against this background and context the Topic Group has concluded that the **economic role** of Morpeth (and the wider plan area) should be primarily as a rural service centre, whilst also contributing to the regeneration of the wider South East Northumberland (particularly in the light of the completion of the South East Strategic Link Road) and the wider Tyne and Wear city-region "offer"

The **economic objectives** for Morpeth have been agreed as:

- To maintain the vibrancy of the town centre as an economic driver
- To develop Morpeth as a key hub in the region's tourism economy
- To provide a range of employment sites and business accommodation that enables Morpeth to develop a more sustainable economy

And for the wider plan area:

- To further develop the local economy in Pegswood in order that it becomes a more sustainable community
- To promote the growth and diversification of the rural economy

4. Tourism

Tourism is an important part of the economy of Morpeth and the surrounding area.

A number of salient facts demonstrate this: -

Morpeth is at the heart of Northumberland and a potential hub for visitors who wish to explore the strategic tourist spots in the county such as the coast, the castles, Hadrian's Wall & Kielder.

In 2009 Northumberland Tourism estimated that Morpeth borough's share of the tourist economy was 11% of Northumberland's total. In 2011 the tourist contribution to Northumberland was estimated at £706 million suggesting that the former Morpeth borough attracted just over £71 m in net worth.

In 2009 a survey was conducted of visitors to Morpeth Town. The survey, conducted over four days in Spring and Summer, suggested that the average number of visitors and aggregate expenditure per day was 118 and £2,589.43 respectively.

At the same time a number of other points are worth noting: -

Morpeth is a pleasant Market Town within a rural environment, with a number of historical and heritage attractions, a well developed retail offer, some interesting pubs, café's and restaurants and

an environment that makes it ideal for walking, cycling and picnicking. However there is no single large attraction and the vast majority of visitors are here for the day and consist of a large number who live in the North East and who have visited Morpeth before.

The B&B's when surveyed suggest there are three categories of visitor. The majority are here on business. A large proportion are here to attend a family event such as a wedding, birthday or funeral and the third largest group are visitors who are in the main travelling through.

The number of visitors and the amount they spend compare unfavourably with Hexham, Berwick and Alnwick. Hexham and Berwick attract more visitors and all three towns have a greater proportion of tourists staying in or around the town, which means they spend more.

More recent research has suggested travel consumers patterns of behaviour are changing. Most leave it late to research and book trips and holidays. The majority will use the internet for research with 40% using review sites to get the opinions of other travellers. Consumers will obtain travel advice through social media and are beginning to use mobile devices to greater effect when researching. And 42% of tourist consumers who book online suggest they were swayed by the online customer experience.

4.1 Key Issues

The consultation process has suggested a number of key issues, local concerns and local perspectives that have direct relevance to the above facts.

As a result of this process a number of recommendations can be made. Views are sought on the following:

Morpeth needs to develop a tourist strategy. That tourist strategy should exploit Morpeth's central location in Northumberland and its potential to act as a tourism hub to visitor attractions across Northumberland, the Tyne and Wear City-Region, and the wider region

The strategy should examine the day and long term visitor as two succinct entities that require different marketing perspectives. Morpeth should deal with both perspectives.

Morpeth needs to devolve responsibility for tourist development to a specific body that will ensure a strategy is developed, implemented and is frequently reported on. That body should be able to advise strategic stakeholders when other aspects of the town's development impact either in a positive or negative way on tourism.

The newly established Morpeth Town Team has the potential to development a strategic, coordinated approach to tourism development and promotion

Morpeth needs to develop a strategic attraction for the longer stay visitor. Given Morpeth's historical background and significance, a heritage centre may be one option, but the long term viability of any such attraction would need to be established

There is a desire to see vacant properties brought back into use. It is acknowledged that Morpeth needs more hotel space, perhaps a combination of a small, luxury, boutique hotel as well as a larger capacity hotel.

Morpeth needs to develop a strategy that ensures the internet is fully exploited to provide an interactive window to what Morpeth has to offer for the visitor.

4.2 Implications for the Neighbourhood Plan

There would appear to be potential for the development of both a budget hotel and a “boutique” hotel within Morpeth. Ideally these should have a town centre location and where developments are brought forward on the edge of town they will need to demonstrate that no alternative sites capable of accommodating such a development were available in the town centre

There is also support for the development of larger scale visitor attractions to strengthen the visitor economy, as well as leisure facilities and food and drink establishments.

The existing and emerging planning policy framework would support and help enable such an approach

The good connectivity that Morpeth has within the region, and with wider national transport networks, can help us to realise our tourism ambitions.

5. The Town Centre and the Retail Offer

As part of the preparation of their Core Strategy NCC commissioned two studies from consultants, Whyte Young Green Planning and Design – A Study of Retail, Leisure and Other Town Centre Uses in Northumberland (Feb 2011) and Northumberland Town Centre and Retail Study Update (January 2013). The following commentary is based largely on their findings and recommendations in respect of Morpeth.

The initial study included a Residents Survey on Retail Provision – it should be noted however that this was undertaken prior to the completion of the Sanderson’s Arcade redevelopment.



Sanderson Arcade, Morpeth

Shoppers interviewed felt that the range and quality of shops in Morpeth needed to be improved. Vacant floor space in Morpeth was at 8% which is similar to the national average. A large proportion of the vacant units and floor space were situated in the former Sanderson Arcade. Furthermore, in recent years, the amount of vacant floor space has increased in the town centre. The availability of public parking spaces (39%) and the cost of parking (52%) were seen as poor or very poor by the largest proportion of respondents. The majority of shoppers interviewed (81%) found it easy to travel into Morpeth by bus. At the time of the survey, the ‘new’ Sanderson Arcade was due to re-open with a number of well-known retailers having signed up to the scheme. Also, as part of the revised Sanderson Arcade, a new transport interchange and long-stay parking were to be introduced which should benefit Morpeth.

In 2011 WYG advised that the retail offer serves an important role in meeting some of the day to day needs of the local population. The convenience store offer (Food shopping) is currently dominated by the (existing) Morrisons store. Whilst the good edge of centre location of this store means that it contributes to the ongoing vitality and viability of the centre WYG conclude that there is a need (particularly in qualitative terms) for an additional food store in Morpeth.

In terms of comparison goods the Sanderson's Arcade redevelopment has significantly improved the comparison ((non-food) retail offer in Morpeth Town Centre. Whilst this development is likely to have increased the overall market share of Morpeth ***WYG consider it is important that any future expenditure growth is focused in ensuring that this important development is a success rather than allowing further retail development outside the town centre that may adversely impact on Sandersons Arcade.***

By 2013 WYG now consider that in the light of the development of the new Morrisons food store at Low Stanners there is unlikely to be the need for additional convenience floor space over the plan period. In respect of comparison floor space WYG advise that although there is a very modest under provision the impact of the Sanderson's Arcade redevelopment on the centre's vitality and viability is analysed in detail before any additional comparison goods floor space is planned for.

On the basis of some initial studies seen by the Topic Group the impact of Sanderson's Arcade has been to reduce footfall in Newgate Street, a trend that might be exacerbated when the new Morrisons opens at Low Stanners.

5.1 Stakeholder Interviews

To complement the "hard evidence" summarised above a series of stakeholder interviews have been undertaken with Richard Rutherford, owner of Rutherford's Department Store; Medi Parry, Sanderson's Arcade Manager; and Ken Stait from the Chamber of Trade to provide a more local perspective on the retail offer and the town centre more generally. The outcome of these discussions is outlined below.

A strong indicator of the potential for retail in Morpeth is Dransfield's decision to invest heavily in the creation of the new Sanderson Arcade. The demand for the "higher quality end" of retail has been recognised. Sanderson Arcade has a mixed offer of independent retailers and national companies and the management is researching retail offers that are not available in the North East. If these can be attracted to Morpeth, it contributes to the uniqueness of the town.

There is recognition that internet shopping is changing people's shopping habits. Traders are adapting through, for example, providing an order and collect service.

Internet shopping cannot replace the 'shopping experience', through which Morpeth attracts many visitors. The Sanderson Arcade recognises the importance of the quality of that experience and accordingly there is a strong emphasis on customer service.

The fact that companies which started as internet only retailers are now seeking a town centre presence, for example, The Wool Shop in the Sanderson Arcade, indicates a confidence in the strength of the market sector the High Street attracts.

The supply of good quality restaurants and tea/ coffee shops is integral to the overall experience of a day out with retail as a focus. It also encourages the shopper to stay longer in the town.

The co-existence of the Sanderson Arcade and a range of attractive and distinctive retailers such as the family owned Rutherford's department store is an important ingredient in the success of the retail sector in the town.

In terms of attracting people from a wider radius, while the Sanderson Arcade is a focus, people are likely to walk to the end and the appearance of the town and presentation of the retail outlets is vital to their decision on whether or not to explore further, up and down Bridge Street and potentially Oldgate and Newgate.

The high number of independent retailers is a draw and negates against an impression of the High Street being 'just like anywhere else.'

Questions:

Should Morpeth's retail centre aim to preserve the 'unique' and quality ambience that it has aimed to create?

What, if anything is missing from the retail offer? (Appropriate to the size of the town?)

5.2 Car- Parking and traffic flow

Whilst the issues connected to parking have been fiercely debated in the town, there is a view which suggests that availability rather than price of parking is the key factor.

The Morpeth Northern Bypass, when developed, is expected to reduce traffic pressure within the town and this could open the opportunity for more time limited High Street parking (i.e. 20- 30 minutes) to allow customers to pop into local shops for odd items. The belief is that the convenience of being able to park outside the shops on Bridge Street, Newgate Street and Oldgate would make people more likely to use these shops.

Questions:

What form of parking arrangements would encourage you to use local shops on a more regular basis?

Possibilities for future development/ limitations on development ?

A prevailing view from neighbourhood plan consultations across the various themes is that the green corridors into Morpeth should be preserved.

There is a concern that out of town development 'spreads the town out' and creates a more urban feel which would detract from the current ambience. It is seen as crucial that the outlying parishes remain separate and that the green areas between them and Morpeth Town remain.

There is a view that development to the town centre/ retail should be within the current boundaries and rather than push out beyond this, attention is paid to whether some facilities are in the right place. For example, opinions have been expressed that facilities such as the post office sorting depot, telephone exchange and leisure centre would be better situated out of the town centre.

This would free up space within the town centre for small scale retail development and extra car parks- these could be two- three storey, open topped in appropriate locations. This would serve to create more parking but also reduce current pressure on traffic and parking by taking the employees/ users of these facilities out of the town. The leisure centre could perhaps be situated at the St Georges development site or Craik Park, while the post office sorting depot and telephone exchange could perhaps go on Coopies Lane Industrial Estate.

In terms of developing the retail sector of the town spatially, it has been suggested that use is made of the backs of shops to create a 'double front' i.e. encouragement could be given for the use of land at the backs of shops to be opened up and made pleasant to allow customers access from either direction and the connecting alleyways could become attractive courtyards- similar to Bakewell in Derbyshire. This increases window space, enabling customers to see into shops more. The option of wandering into one shop and out the back entrance to another may increase the number of people entering shops. Courtyard developments could be formed at the rear of Newgate Street, and a new opening onto Newgate Street could be formed at Biltons Court with a substantial courtyard area with opportunity to form small shop units either side of the yard.

One proposal is to identify what gaps there are in the market- modern furniture and large electrical stores have been mentioned- are there redundant buildings which could house such stores? The Post Office sorting office site, if this facility were moved, might be a suitable site for such retail outlets.

The size of store is important; the feeling is that it should be appropriate to the town- not too large. The view is that 'we are not the Metro Centre' – and should not try to be. People come to Morpeth for a different experience, as reported earlier, the mix of independents and nationals, something different and the ambience of an historic market town.

Should development make the most of the land that appears to be vacant or underused at present? For example, extending past the library and along the riverbank towards the new Morrisons site, create a new development including a promenade with bars, restaurants and galleries with the possibility of including a museum or other visitor attraction? The site could also include residential development above and utilize a site in a way that the town centre can have a riverside frontage.

Questions:

Are there services currently within the town that would be better situated out of the town centre to provide space for larger item retail outlets such as furniture and white goods or small multi-storey car-parks?

Would you like to see features such as attractive courtyard shopping/ eating areas?

Would you like development to make the most of the attractive riverside setting (now that the flood defences are being installed?)

5.3 Implications for the Neighbourhood Plan

Morpeth is surviving the economic recession better than many places and the view is that we must be doing something right. It is believed that the elements that are contributing to the town's relative success are its distinctiveness in the retail offer and the high quality ambience. The view is therefore

that whatever development occurs in the future should maintain Morpeth's sense of identity and distinctiveness as a retail centre, and complement what is already working well. A town centre first policy approach is broadly supported.

Any mixed use redevelopment proposals in or adjacent to the town Centre would need to be appropriate in terms of their scale, layout and design and should not have an adverse impact on local amenity or heritage. Equally development that improves the environment or brings disused heritage assets into appropriate economic use will be particularly supported.

Any further small scale retail development within the town centre should ideally address the spatial imbalance that has been created by the new Sanderson Arcade and new Morrisons development

It is considered that the existing and emerging planning policy framework would broadly support and help enable such an approach.

No primary research has been undertaken on identifying a primary shopping area and town centre boundary.

The limited provision of bulky good retailers within Morpeth was noted through the Launch Event Programme. WYG advise in their retail study that there are competing retail parks in the Tyneside conurbation which appear to offer more choice and quality than those in Cowpen Road Blyth and Cramlington Town Centre and there would not appear to be opportunities to develop such a Retail Park in Morpeth town centre or edge of centre location. The development of the Morpeth Northern Bypass could open up an opportunity to develop a retail park in the Fairmoor area; an alternative location might be on Coopies Lane but this may not be the visible location preferred by such retailers. Such a development may also be perceived to be a threat to the vitality of the town centre.

Many of the views expressed during the discussions that were convened echo some observations made in studies such as the Northumberland Town Centre and Retail Study Update prepared by Northumberland County Council in January 2013. It notes that the National Planning Policy Framework advises local planning authorities that when preparing their Local Plan they should: "Recognise town centres as the heart of communities and pursue policies to support their vitality and viability." and, "Promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer which reflect the individuality of town centres."

6. Employment Sites and Business Accommodation

6.1 Existing Employment Sites

As part of their preparation of the Core Strategy NCC commissioned consultants NLP to undertake an Employment Land Review that was completed in 2011. The following commentary on employment sites and premises is largely based on its findings and conclusions. It is understood that further work is being done on employment land requirements in the light of the prolonged economic downturn but this is not currently available (June 2013).

Morpeth has maintained a relatively healthy industrial market due to its easy access from the A1, proximity to Tyneside and good local services. Within the Plan Area the two principal employment locations are Coopies Lane and Pegswood Industrial Estates. Piramal's pharmaceutical site is a single user specialist site. There appear to be a good demand for vacant units as they become available but

mainly to meet local demand. Piecemeal development means that there is unlikely to be any available land that could be marketed for inward investment

To the north of Morpeth there are three allocated employment sites (in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan) located at Fairmoor. Two of the sites are predominantly greenfield sites with the potential to be visible and attractive sites to the market. Both have access and infrastructure issues and this has constrained their delivery thus far. The development of the Morpeth Northern Bypass will ultimately improve their attractiveness to the market. The third Fairmoor site is land immediately adjacent to the Northgate Hospital and is constrained by access issues and the proximity of sensitive uses.

A site at St. Mary's Hospital is now in the process of being constructed as a residential-led mixed use development but the scale of employment land provision has been significantly reduced in scale from 33.6 ha to 0.444ha likely to be developed for B1 uses.

NLP conclude that there appears to be a particular undersupply of unconstrained available employment sites in Hexham, Prudhoe and Morpeth. Future requirements for B class employment space (business parks, general employment land and distribution) were estimated using employment forecasts, past development rates and labour supply growth. **There is a general consensus amongst employment stakeholders that a number of more successful employment areas, including Morpeth are reaching full capacity and in urgent need for new employment sites and units to be provided.** However the County and Morpeth in particular has an above average proportion of residents employed in the public sector which has faced severe funding cuts; this scenario is likely to extend into the short to medium term. Additionally austerity measures introduced by the current Government means there is less public funding available to invest in site preparation. Traditionally this has been a means of opening up new sites in large parts of Northumberland. To counter this some potentially unviable sites could be cross-subsidised by higher value end uses particularly where significant investment is required in infrastructure and / or site remediation.

In terms of office space there are currently offices available in Morpeth at Sanderson's Arcade, Telford Court and Longhirst Hall Business Centre (technically outside the Plan Area). Interest in office space is understood to be mainly local in nature, as the County is not generally regarded as a significant office location (in contrast to Tyne and Wear where there are a broad range of business parks and office space available).



Longhirst Hall Business Centre, Morpeth



Telford Court, Morpeth

NLP's recommendation in respect of Morpeth's employment land portfolio is that on the basis that infrastructure difficulties can be viably overcome two of the three Fairmoor sites should be retained as allocated sites whilst the third site might be de-allocated, leaving a portfolio of 22 ha of available employment land.

In terms of future requirements Morpeth remains an attractive commercial proposition due to its location and attractive setting. There is however a perceived lack of good quality reasonable sized industrial space to cater for future anticipated demand. NLP consider that there has been a limited supply of good quality office space and (*in their view*) limited alternative town centre options. Depending on the revised Fairmoor allocations coming forward NLP considers Morpeth could require further office and industrial provision in future years of around 5ha with good sites for prestigious office and industrial provision either town centre or edge of centre locations in the medium term. NLP consider the redevelopment of vacant land at County Hall could be explored further to meet such a requirement.

6.2 Potential Development / Redevelopment Opportunities

Notwithstanding the view of NLP regarding the lack of town Centre sites members of the Economy Topic Group considered that from a local perspective there were an extensive number of potential development or redevelopment opportunities in the town centre and elsewhere in the town. A desk top exercise was undertaken to set out these possible development sites, their likely availability (where known), and their potential alternative uses.

Although residential use would be the most valuable end use (and indeed many former commercial premises have been converted to residential uses over the last 10 -20 years) there may be a range of alternative development options that could meet wider plan objectives and strengthen town centre and local economy as well as providing valuable community facilities.

6.3 Implications for the Neighbourhood Plan

Coopies Lane is the largest industrial estate in the plan area and whilst there remains market interest in available premises there are few available sites within the estate that would be capable of attracting new employment and the location has been assessed as being of average quality. This has been the case for many years now – effectively there is no employment land supply pipeline in the Morpeth area. The County Council's Employment Land Study advises that as a commercial location Morpeth is considered to have considerable potential for strong employment growth due to its accessibility to the Tyne and Wear conurbation and its generally attractive surroundings. It proposes that two of the current Fairmoor employment sites (and allocations) are retained with an additional small site identified on land adjacent to County Hall. The Fairmoor sites may however have to be mixed use, in order to cross subsidise infrastructure requirements.

At Pegswood the Parish Council has identified that there may be scope for some additional employment land adjacent to the new Community Fire Station and Pegswood Bypass

Additionally the desk top exercise has identified that there appear to be a wide range of potential development sites in and around the town centre; these are likely to be suitable for a range of uses including commercial uses. However no detailed feasibility work has been undertaken on any of these sites; it is not known whether the respective landowners would make sites available. Accordingly it would seem unrealistic to allocate such sites in the plan – rather the range of potential development sites should simply be highlighted through the plan.

7. Overall Conclusions

Notwithstanding the ongoing economic downturn Morpeth continues to be a relatively dynamic and successful rural market town as seen through the recent investment by Dransfield in Sanderson

Arcade and a new supermarket. Evidence from the County Council also advises that Morpeth has considerable commercial potential due to its proximity to the A1 and the Tyneside conurbation

Government advises that planning policy should support economic growth and provide the right amount of employment land in the right location. The emerging Core Strategy advises that rural market towns are drivers for the rural economy and a location for larger scale employment activities.

Against this background it is appropriate for the Neighbourhood Plan to give consideration to the possible provision of employment land. No primary research has been undertaken on the need for additional employment land or appropriate locations for such a use. WYG proposes that two of the current Fairmoor employment sites (and allocations) are retained with an additional small site identified on land adjacent to County Hall. The Fairmoor sites may however have to be mixed use, in order to cross subsidise infrastructure requirements. Pegswood Parish Council has also identified land adjacent to the new Pegswood Bypass.

Additionally the desk top exercise has identified that there appear to be a wide range of potential development sites in and around the town centre; these are likely to be suitable for a range of uses including commercial uses but the scale location and delivery of such developments cannot be guaranteed. Any redevelopment proposals that were to come forward in or adjacent to the town centre would need to be appropriate in terms of their scale, layout and design and should not have an adverse impact on local amenity or heritage. Equally development that improves the environment or brings disused heritage assets into appropriate economic use will be particularly supported.

Two of the economic objectives of the plan are to maintain the vibrancy of the town centre as an economic driver and to develop Morpeth as a key hub in the region's tourism economy. It is noted that existing and emerging planning policy is broadly supportive in terms of us meeting these objectives. Equally whilst we would wish to diversify and strengthen both the retail and visitor offer in the town centre it is equally important that the town retains its distinctiveness and general ambience

It has also been noted that whilst many economic stakeholders see Morpeth and the town centre as an attractive commercial proposition both the employment land allocations and some of the development opportunities are long standing but have not been realised. Whilst the newly formed Town Team can take a strategic overview of developments in the town and town centre in particular it does not have access to resources. As we begin to emerge from the economic downturn it is considered that some form of interventions may be required if we are to realise our economic ambitions and aspirations for the town. Realising our ambitions would benefit the town, South East Northumberland and contribute to the offer of the wider region.

8. Appendices

8.1 The initial conclusions from this “desk top” review of development opportunities are summarised below.

1. Registrar Building/ Former Girls High School-Newgate Street

Existing-Former Girls High School, later used for a variety of local government functions-e.g. Social Services offices, Registrars etc. Substantial three storey building of some character, fronting onto Newgate Street. Buildings to the rear more of a mixture.

Availability-Unsure of current occupancy, but would appear to be available in the short to medium term.

Potential-The Newgate Street frontage building should be retained, although there may be more scope for some new build to the rear. The refurbishment/ new build could have potential for offices (public or private) possibly together with some workshop/ studio space or residential (flats). Pedestrian access could be achieved from Newgate Street, with vehicular access from Cottingwood Lane.

2. Telephone Exchange

Existing-Unattractive 3 storey 1950`s building fronting onto Newgate Street and backing down to the River Wansbeck. On the site of the Old Morpeth Workhouse.

Availability-Still in use as a telephone exchange, although modern technology is likely to have resulted in a less intensive use of floorspace than in previous decades. To what extent all or part of the building would be available for redevelopment or alternative uses is unknown. Whilst this is the type of use that could be accommodated on an industrial estate or business park, it is likely that relocating telecommunications infrastructure could be costly.

Potential-A redevelopment of the site would be welcome, with the most obvious potential being for residential to take advantage of river views. The site would also have potential, particularly on the Newgate Street frontage, for office use. 3 stories would be an appropriate scale for redevelopment. Vehicular access, which would be from the busy Newgate Street could be a problem. Potential high redevelopment costs because of telecoms infrastructure below ground.

3. Benfield Site(s)

Existing-two former garage sites under the ownership of Benfield Motors; one fronting onto Pethgate, the other onto Castle Square. Although their frontages are separated by the Waterford Lodge Hotel, they are linked together at the rear, and can therefore be considered as one site. The site contains two large garage shed type buildings, together with showrooms. The showroom fronting onto Castle

Square, a former domestic building, may be worthy of retention.

Availability-The site is currently vacant and on the market.

Potential-The site is well located close to the centre of town, and has potential for a number of uses including a hotel (possibly being used in conjunction with the Waterford Lodge), residential, offices or mixture of the above. Vehicular access could be from Castle Square, although Pethgate is likely to be the preferred option.

4. Davidson`s Garage Site

Existing. On the corner of Castle Square and Goosehill, the buildings on this former garage, petrol filling station and mineral water factory site have now been demolished.

Availability. The site has planning permission for a four storey development of 60 flats and 3 commercial units. It is currently being used as a site compound for the Morpeth Flood Protection Scheme and is therefore unlikely to be available until 2015.

Potential. It is an attractive site for development; close to the town centre and bounded by the River Wansbeck to the north. The site obviously has potential for residential use, but would also have potential for some offices and /or an hotel. The current flood protection works should reduce the possibility of the site being affected flooding in the future.

5. Police Station

Existing- The stone built 3 storey building currently housing the Police Station was formerly part of the Morpeth Court House/ Gaol complex. It also includes more modern buildings to the rear.

Availability- The plans of the Police Authority regarding the future of the Police Station are unknown (to me at Least). It is debateable, however whether the current range of buildings are seen as meeting the long term needs of the force. The site may therefore be available in the medium to long term. Potential-The main Police Station buildings may be worthy of retention, but it is a large site with potential for a mix of new build and refurbishment, most likely for residential use, but possibly also for an hotel or offices or a mixture of all three. Vehicular access would be from Castle Bank or possibly from Goose hill.

6. Court House

Existing- A very dominant `castle` like building (indeed many visitors to the town think it is Morpeth Castle), formerly a court house and part of the former gaol complex. It currently contains some flats.

Availability-A large part of the building is vacant (particularly the old court room) and has formerly been used as a gym and a nightclub. Whether the whole building is available or just the former leisure uses is unclear.

Potential-This is a listed building and any potential use must not compromise it`s historic integrity, particularly the former courtroom space. This has limited it`s development potential and hindered previous attempts to find a suitable use. Some type of leisure use would seem to be the most appropriate use if these problems can be overcome. Previous uses have included a nightclub and a gym. Costly repairs/maintenance and listing constraints, and possibly limited parking availability , inhibiting development potential.

7. Cottage Hospital

Existing- The site contains a 2 storey frontage building with a 3 storey more modern ward building to the rear. The buildings currently accommodate a G P practice, x-ray and physio services as well as wards for mainly elderly patients. A private care home for elderly residents has recently been built within the grounds.

Availability-Many of the services of the hospital will be transferred to the new IntergratedHealthCentre currently nearing completion near the Easter Field. The current bed spaces will in future be leased in a local private sector care home. The site could therefore be available in the near future. Potential-The site has potential for residential (either flats or houses), care home accommodation, or offices.

8. Willows/ Library Site

Existing-Modern 1 and 2 storey library building adjacent to 2 linked 3 storey Victorian villas currently used as the County Library H Q.

Availability-No definite proposals (as far as I know) to relocate the library or H Q, although there may be plans to do so in the medium to long term. Whilst any new library would have to be located in the town centre, the H Q function could be located on a business park type location thus releasing a potentially valuable town centre site. There could, however, be conservation concerns regarding the demolition the Willows.

Potential-If and when either of these 2 sites becomes available, they would have potential for residential (probably flats), offices or hotel, or a mixture of all three. This may include a refurbishment of the Willows.

9./10. Health Centre/ Ambulance Station-Gas House Lane

Existing- Currently 2 separate sites, but both owned by the NHS. The health centre is currently vacant following flooding, whilst the ambulance station is operational.

Availability-The health centre is likely to be available in the near future with the opening of the new Integrated Health Centre. The future of the ambulance station is unknown, but it is the type of use which could be accommodated in an alternative location, provided there was good vehicular access.

Potential-The site in the past has been affected by flooding, but this threat should be reduced by the current flood protection works. The site, which is close to the town centre has potential for residential (probably flats), offices, or even small workshops, although these would have to be compatible with the largely residential neighbourhood.

11. Sorting Office, Oldgate

Existing-The site comprises of the former Post Office fronting onto Oldgate, together with the large sorting office and vehicular yard to the rear.

Availability-The Royal Mail's intentions for the site are not clear, but it is the type of use which could be accommodated in an industrial area, thus releasing a valuable town centre site.

Potential-The proximity to the heart of the Town centre suggests that this site would have potential for commercial uses, such as a retail or leisure type use on the Oldgate frontage with offices and possibly some workshops to the rear.

12. Pumping Station, Mitford Road

Existing- Site of a former pumping station and water storage facility adjacent to the River Wansbeck in a rural situation between Morpeth and Mitford.

Availability- There has been recent work on this site which may mean that the site is now surplus to requirements.

Potential-Even if available, the location of this site in the attractive Wansbeck Valley (identified in previous plans as an area of High Landscape Value and likely to be in the Morpeth Greenbelt extension area) would preclude anything other than the reuse of the existing buildings or a very modest redevelopment.

13. Field next to Old Person's Home, (foot of Whorral Bank)

Existing- Agricultural greenfield site.

Availability- Unknown.

Potential- As this is a greenfield site within the Wansbeck Valley, an area previously identified as having a high landscape value and part of a green corridor into Morpeth, the development of this site is not appropriate.

14/15. Former Morpeth Fire Station and H Q

Fairmoor—Awaiting MN B implementation—likely demand for housing?

16. Northgate- Part awaiting MNB implementation—likely demand for housing?

17. Peacock Gap- Greenfield, but in very sustainable location and withing CMDLP settlement boundary. Likely demand for housing.

18. St George's Hospital Site.—housing application expected soon—no known commercial/business element. Between St. Georges and Morpeth Northern Bypass.As above, but dependent on MNB implementation.

19 . Vacant former transport depot on Coopies Way—approx 60,000square feet—vacant for 10 years plus? Planning permission for DIY in early to mid "Nineties"s approved but fettered by

Planning Inspectorate condition that less than 10% floors pace should be used for non-DIY products. Reason for condition to protect then imminent town centre redevelopment. Site large enough for small scale business park etc?

20. Former gas depot site on Gas House Lane.- High costs for removing infrastructure, but some potential?

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES – PEGSWOOD and Other surrounding Parishes

Pegswood Parish Council has a vision that Pegswood should be allowed and encouraged to grow, not least because of the significant impact the building of the Morpeth Northern Bypass will have on the village and its hinterland. The Parish Council has presented this vision to the County Council as part of its response to the Core Strategy consultations.

In pursuing a strategy of sustainable development, the Parish has identified a number of potential development sites which are outlined below.

21. North of the Village.

Existing- To the north of the village there is an area of agricultural land rising to a low ridge before the land drops away to the boundary with Longhirst Parish.

Availability- Undeveloped land in private ownership.

Potential- The Parish Council has identified that housing would be the most appropriate use for this area. Road links could be achieved from the Longhirst road in the east, and/or to the west behind the Cookswell Estate onto the Morpeth Road. Footpath links would be provided to the heart of the village.

22. Industrial Estate

Existing- This comprises an old industrial area to the north east of the village, largely surrounded by housing.

Availability- Although there are no current proposals to remove this industrial estate, its relocation would free up a suitable brown field site already fringed by existing housing development.

Potential- Housing use would be the most appropriate use for this site.

23. Village Heart

Existing - The Parish Council have identified suitable brownfield land within the heart of the village at the junction of the Morpeth Road and Longhirst Road. The area currently contains an untidy mix of social clubs, housing, stables and small commercial premises.

Availability - The land is an a mix of ownerships and it may not be possible to achieve a comprehensive scheme.

Potential - Development in this area would be encouraged as more housing came on stream in Pegswood. This would require suitable convenience stores, and a small/ medium supermarket is being considered with additional smaller units to the rear for local businesses. Additional redevelopment or refurbishment for other community uses, with suitable footpath links, would help to regenerate the village heart.

24. Area between the Railway and Bypass.

Existing - Currently agricultural land bounded by the railway line to the north and the Bypass to the south.

Availability - Undeveloped land in private ownership.

Potential - In wishing to promote the growth of employment opportunities the Parish Council has identified this site as being suitable for business and employment use. This could allow for the possible transfer of the existing industrial estate (see 2 above) and other uses such as Cookswell

Garage out of the heart of the village, allowing better development of that freed land. Access could be directly onto the Bypass (potentially difficult) or more likely via the service road behind the Community Fire Station.

Development of this land would assist not only Pegswood on employment issues but also Morpeth itself via the Neighbourhood Plan.

In addition to these major development sites there are a number of smaller sites within the village which may become available over the plan period. These include:

- **Pegswood Welfare** . Lease expires in 2022.

- **Cookswell Garage** (see 4 above) . specific housing need such as sheltered housing.

8.2 Economic questions to be addressed :

- a. *Is retail led development alone sufficient to maintain the vibrancy of the town centre? If not, what other developments or initiatives might also strengthen the role of the town centre as an economic driver?*
- b. *Is it possible in the current economic climate to strengthen Morpeth's economy by developing a more fully fledged tourism role as well as a day visitor economy? If yes how can the Neighbourhood Plan assist?*
- c. *Is it appropriate to identify and allocate employment sites alongside housing sites in the Neighbourhood Plan? If yes are the two sites at Fairmoor (that have previously been allocated in the CMBC District Local Plan) appropriate locations for business park developments? Should additional employment locations be developed adjacent to County Hall and at Pegswood adjacent to the new Fire Station?*
- d. *Have you any ideas about what end uses might the potential development opportunity sites might be re-developed / promoted? (You can refer to any number of the potential development sites referred to in the Technical Paper Appendix.)*