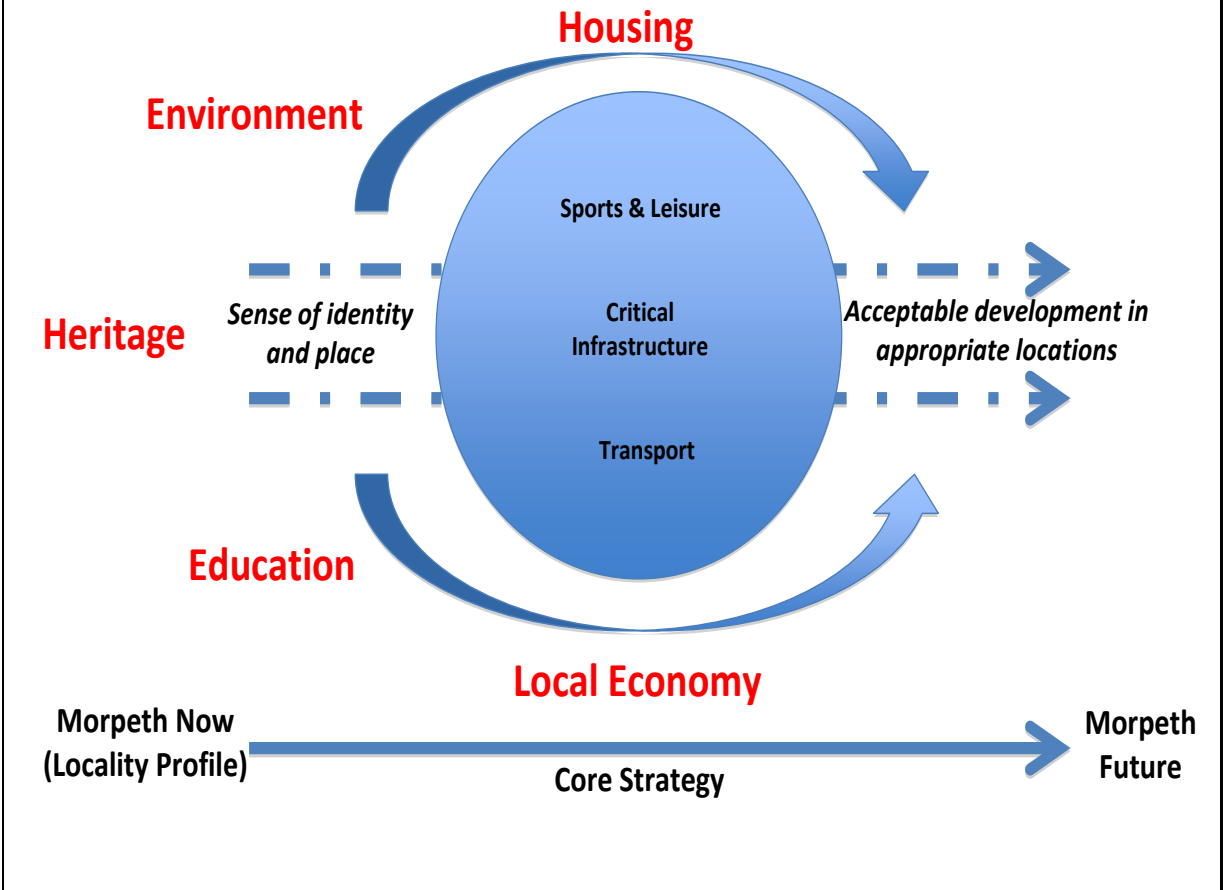


Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan - Overview



Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan (MNP)

Sports & Leisure

Cross Cutting Theme: Issues & Options

Latest Draft: v2 24/07/2013

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SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

Morpeth is a historic rural market town, classified within the Northumberland draft Core Strategy documents as a main settlement. 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.

Sports & Leisure is a cross cutting theme being considered within 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. Core topics are Education, Environment, Heritage, Housing and Local Economy; with additional cross cutting themes considering Infrastructure and Transport.

This preliminary Issues and Options document summarises from an infrastructure audit of existing sports and leisure facilities within or very close to the aforementioned MNP area boundaries. This is an ongoing work in progress, but highlights a large and varied range of community recreational facilities and activities (summarised Appendix 1) appropriate to a 19,000 residents population. This infrastructure audit is also attached as evidence (Appendix 2).

Sports & Leisure is considered to be an integral part of any healthy social community, often referred to as being “the glue” which binds the whole together as it involves a discretionary use of personal time enabling both individual and collective happiness. It can also facilitate learning and development, through participation in new activities or enhancing existing skills. It should provide opportunities for all community members: young infants > developing children > teenagers > through adulthood > senior citizenship.

Key elements are as follows, and separate sections will review Sports and Arts / Leisure :-

1. Consider current patterns of provision
2. Highlight strengths & establish deficiencies: quantity / quality
3. Identify potential issues for future Sports and Arts / Leisure provision

SECTION B: **SPORTS** ISSUES & OPTIONS

Morpeth: the town is well served with a wide range of sports available across age groups, although quality of facilities are considered variable and could benefit from more joined up interactions / sharing.

Centrally situated **Riverside Leisure Centre** neighbours the River Wansbeck and lies directly across a footbridge from **Carlisle Park** and its recently refurbished pavilion. The Leisure Centre is now somewhat dated (@ 1960's built) and offers swimming pool, fitness gym, multi-functional indoor sports hall including 5-a-side / badminton / basketball / judo etc. The swimming pool is however not the appropriate specification to host swimming competitions, and there are some general public availability restrictions due to varied local swimming clubs. Within Carlisle Park there are 2 high quality bowling greens in regular use, plus 4 tarmac tennis courts although these are not well maintained with 2 currently out of commission. Other facilities include a putting green, skate park, boating / kayaking on River Wansbeck. A separate BMX track exists at the far end of Morpeth Common, although further investment is needed.

Main Morpeth sports clubs include:

Morpeth Rugby Football Club: 400 seniors, plus 650 juniors including parents. Rugby coaching and matches from u7 minis > u17/u18 Colts > 4 senior Mens teams, plus Girls / Ladies teams. 1st XV are well established in RFU North One East league, and facilities have seen recent major clubhouse improvements, new changing block, and acquisition of 3rd rugby pitch across Mitford Road. Clubhouse is available for general hire, and various annual community events are hosted eg. Morpeth Bonfire Night, Morpeth Beer Festival, Morpeth Sevens Tournament.

Morpeth Town AFC: competitive senior football only, with team promoted into EBAC Northern League Division 1 for start of 2013/14 season. Matches are played in an isolated and poorly signposted stadium at Craik Park in the far corner of Morpeth Common. There is a decent pitch, within a relatively under-invested stadium. Despite its relative playing success, the club is independent from and lacks meaningful relationship with local community junior football.

Morpeth Sporting Club: junior football with 340 players across 23 age group teams from minis > u18, both boys & girls. In last twelve months the club has regained FA Charter Standard status and 3 Welfare Officers have recently been appointed. Main issues are its nomadic existence despite significant playing numbers, with no specific home base / pitches / changing facilities – a particular problem with mixed ages / sexes / parent supporters. Unlike rugby continuity, there is no ongoing feeder relationship with Morpeth Town AFC senior football.

Morpeth Harriers: well supported running club, competing in regional & national events on a regular basis across age groups. Dated meeting & changing rooms only clubhouse is separate from but on same site as Rugby Club, however a brand new athletics track has recently been completed at KEV1 school.

Morpeth Golf Club: excellent 18 holes golf course, plus practice range and putting greens. Well appointed clubhouse also hosts various other community club meetings / social gatherings. Also includes a snooker room and golf shop. Under separate ownership, there is a separate 9 hole (all par 3) golf course at N1 Gubeon Golf Centre approx. 2 miles from town centre, which also provides a floodlit covered golf driving range and licensed coffee shop.

Morpeth Cricket, Hockey & Tennis Club: these clubs relocated to Longhirst Hall in 1996 when their previous location at Stobhill was sold for housing development to Bryant Homes. There are 120 seniors, plus 200 juniors enjoying following facilities: grass cricket pitch, astroturf hockey pitch, 6 all-weather floodlit tennis courts. There is an extensive clubhouse, which includes 8 changing rooms plus kitchen / bar / lounge. Main issues are ongoing cost and maintenance of these facilities, and the ability to generate additional income for their future support. It should be noted that Longhirst is just outside the MNP Area boundary, and technically “out of scope”.

Pegswood: Parish Council is in negotiations with Northumberland County Council (NCC) on the transfer of the Welfare Park playing fields and pavilion to its own ownership in 2014:-

> a masterplan for the park will be developed that will see further development of junior playing and training facilities with reconfiguring of football pitches, transfer of existing 4G 5-a-side pitch from behind the Ex Servicemen’s Club, development of a skateboard park, and better use of pavilion.

> plan will also include a possible expansion of the sports & leisure facilities into the fields to West of site.

Hebron / Hepscoth / Mitford: minimal sports facilities in these outlying villages, with exception of Mitford Cricket Club where there is a basic pavilion although funding has been recently secured to build a new replacement.

SECTION C: ARTS / LEISURE ISSUES & OPTIONS

‘Leisure’ is defined as, “...time spent away from work, domestic chores, and other necessary activities” and is intended in this context to be all inclusive and incorporate activities within the community which either bring people together for a leisure activity or enables them individually to pursue a leisure activity. This may also be in relatively ‘passive’ role such as attending an event / performance such as theatre, music and cinema; or more participatory and being engaged in an actual leisure activity (eg. bridge club, performing in a play/pantomime/concert, working an allotment etc.)

Infrastructure for Leisure Activities

In terms of infrastructure the facilities currently available for leisure activities are identified in the Audit (Appendix 2) which includes school buildings, community centres, church halls, managed play areas, as well as allotments, and publicly accessible land such as Carlisle Park or Morpeth Common.

Infrastructure for Performance / Art Activities

There are a number of groups identified in the Audit that are 'performance related' (eg. Morpeth Theatre group, St Georges Community Players, community cinema) who utilise the current facilities available ie. KEV1, St Georges church hall, and the Town Hall. These for a number of reasons such as capacity, viewing, changing facilities and location are not necessarily ideal. It has been suggested over the years that there should be a theatre / arts centre in Morpeth which would provide an up to date facility for the performance of drama, music, dance, film screenings, and other art/drama based activities (possibly akin to the Maltings in Berwick).

SECTION D: SPORTS & LEISURE QUESTIONS

Question 1: *From your own personal knowledge and experience do you think the current sports & leisure activities available provide adequately for:*

Toddlers and pre-teens Yes/No

Teenagers and youth (age <18) Yes/No

Adults (18 – 60) Yes/No

Senior citizens (60+) Yes/No

If you have answered NO to any of the above, what other leisure activities (not currently available) do you think should be provided in MNP area?

Question 2: *Do you think the facilities available for sports & leisure activities in the plan area are currently adequate? Yes / No*

If you have answered NO, what additional sports & leisure facilities do you think there should be within MNP area?

Question 3: *Do you think there should be some form of theatre/arts centre for Morpeth and surrounding areas? Yes / No*

Please add comments to support your answer