



## **Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan**

**Northumberland County Council**

**Referendum Information Statement  
(Including Information for Voters)**

**Statement Published: 15 January 2016**  
**Referendum Date: 25 February 2016**

## About this booklet

On Thursday 25 February 2016, there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood plan for your area. This booklet explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. In this booklet you can find out about:

- The referendum and how you can take part;
- The planning system in England and the development plan
- Neighbourhood plans;
- The neighbourhood area;
- The Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan

## Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question.

For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

***"Do you want Northumberland County Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Morpeth to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"***

## How do I vote in the referendum?

You vote by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper.

Put a cross in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

If more people vote 'Yes' than 'No' in this referendum, then Northumberland County Council will use the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Parishes of Morpeth, Pegswood, Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford.

If more people vote 'No' than 'Yes', then planning applications will continue to be decided without using the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. Instead planning applications would be decided using policies in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003) which would remain as part of the development plan for the local area.

## What is the Development Plan?

In England, decisions on planning applications are made by local planning authorities. Those decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. A development plan is a set of documents that contain policies for the

development and use of land in a local planning authority area. Northumberland County Council is the local planning authority for Northumberland with the exception of areas covered by the Northumberland National Park.

## **What is Neighbourhood Planning?**

Neighbourhood planning powers were introduced in the Localism Act in 2011. Their aim is to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. Local communities prepare neighbourhood plans which are created to show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area. When a neighbourhood plan passes a local referendum it will become part of the development plan for that neighbourhood area and must be used to help in making decisions on planning applications in that area.

## **Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?**

Where town or parish councils exist they are the only organisations that can start the work of preparing a neighbourhood plan. Where there is no town or parish council a neighbourhood forum can be created to prepare a neighbourhood plan. Civil parishes exist across the whole of Northumberland so neighbourhood forums could not be created for the purposes of neighbourhood planning.

In this case, Morpeth Town Council led the preparation of the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan and was supported by Hebron, Hepscott, Mitford and Pegswood Parish Councils.

## **What is a neighbourhood area?**

Neighbourhood areas are areas defined for the purpose of neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans can only be created in formally designated neighbourhood areas. A neighbourhood area can cover single streets or large urban or rural areas.

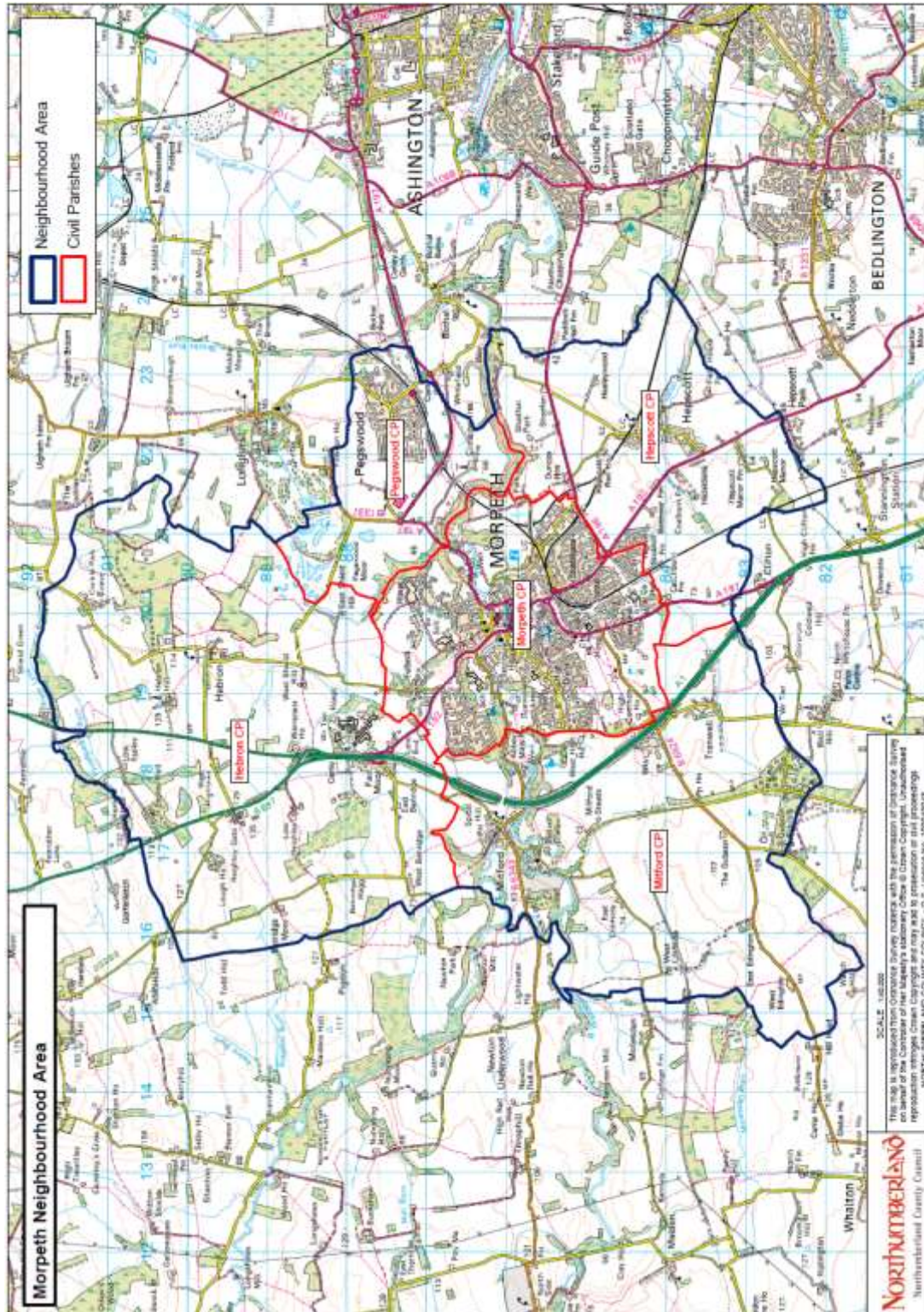
The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are proposed by town or parish councils. This is done by formal application to the County Council who will make the decision about designating a neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood areas will normally follow parish boundaries or groups of parishes.

In Morpeth, the boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by Northumberland County Council in June 2013 and is identical to the civil parish areas of Morpeth, Pegswood, Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford.

## Neighbourhood Planning in Morpeth

The Referendum area is identified on the map in this Information Statement. The area comprises the whole of the civil parishes of Morpeth, Hebron, Hepscoth, Mitford and Pegswood. The Referendum area is identical to the area designated as the Morpeth Neighbourhood Area.



## Referendum expenses

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body organising a campaign during the period of the referendum for referendum purposes. There is a limit to the amount that campaigners can spend on their advertising for the referendum.

The Referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the Morpeth Referendum is £3247.30 to each campaign organiser. The number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum by reference to which the limit has been calculated is 15,005 (as at 07/12/2015).

## Specified documents to be published before Referendum

The County Council is required to make available a number of documents relevant to holding the Referendum. These are called the ***Specified Documents***. A copy of the specified documents, all of which are identified below, may be inspected at:

- **Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF**, between the hours of 8.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Thursday; and 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday;
- **Morpeth Library, Gas House Lane, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 1TA**, between the hours of 9am to 7.30pm Monday to Wednesday, 9am to 5pm Thursday, 9am to 7:30pm Friday and 9:30 to 12:30pm on Saturday.

The specified documents are the:

- Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan: Referendum Plan;
- Report of the independent examiner (29 September 2015);
- Summary of the representations submitted to the independent examiner;
- Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions (*The Basic Conditions Decision Statement*); and a
- Statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning including neighbourhood planning and the referendum (*Referendum Information Statement including Information for Voters*)

All the above documents can also be viewed on Northumberland County Council's website at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

## Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Parishes of Morpeth, Pegswood, Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections; and

- You are 18 years of age or over on 25 February 2016.

You have to be registered to vote by 09 February 2016 to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling our Helpline on 01670 624811.

The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

## **Ways of voting?**

There are three ways of voting:

### **In person on Thursday 25 February 2016:**

- At your local polling station. It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do;
- the polling stations are at:
  - Hepscoth Parish Hall
  - Mitford Community Centre
  - Morpeth Storey Park Community Centre
  - Morpeth Town Hall
  - Morpeth St James Community Centre
  - Morpeth All Saints C of E First School
  - Morpeth Waterford Lodge
  - Stobhill Barnabas Centre
  - Tritlington C of E Aiden First School
  - Pegswood Recreation Ground
- You will receive a poll card confirming your polling station for this referendum. If you do not receive your poll card, you can contact our Helpline on 01670 624811, or email us on [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk) to find out where your polling station is.
- Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm

### **By post:**

- If you have a postal vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this
- To vote by post, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive **by 5pm on 10 February 2016** at this address:
  - Northumberland County Council
  - County Hall
  - Morpeth
  - Northumberland
  - NE61 2EF
- Postal votes can be sent overseas but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your completed postal vote by 10 February 2016;

- You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive in time, you can ask for a replacement **up to 5pm on 25 February 2016** by contacting our Helpline on 01670 624811.

**By proxy:**

- If you have a proxy vote already you will receive a poll card confirming this;
- If you can't get to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf;
- To vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive **by 5pm on 17 February 2016** at this address:

Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

- When you apply for a proxy vote, you must say why you cannot vote in person;
- Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from our Helpline on 01670 624811 or by emailing [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk). You can also download forms from Northumberland County Council's website.

Postal vote application details can be found here:

<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote/postal-vote-application>

Proxy vote application details can be found here:

<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote/apply-to-vote-by-proxy>

## **Am I registered to vote?**

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. You can check if you are registered by calling our Helpline on 01670 624811.

If you are not registered to vote, you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by 09 February 2016 at this address:

Northumberland County Council  
County Hall  
Morpeth  
Northumberland  
NE61 2EF

Registration forms can also be provided by contacting our Helpline on 01670 624811 or by emailing [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk). You can also register online at: <http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote>

### **How to find out more:**

Further general information on neighbourhood planning, including documents relating to the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan, can be found on the County Council's website at:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Planning-policy/Neighbourhood.aspx>

For queries about planning issues and neighbourhood planning in general, please contact Northumberland County Council's Communities and Infrastructure Planning Team on 01670 623619.

For more information about voting and the arrangements for this referendum, please contact our Helpline on 01670 624811 or [elections@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:elections@northumberland.gov.uk)