

MORPETH TOWN COUNCIL

POSITION STATEMENT ON PARISH BOUNDARIES

Background

The town of Morpeth has changed and is changing fundamentally due to a raft of planning permissions granted between 2008 and 2017.

This represents, when built out, a significant increase in the population of Morpeth a 50% increase in the number of households. A significant % of those households will be families, with children, because developers are building 3,4 and 5 bedroomed properties.

This has led to a material increase in the size of the town with several orbital housing estates being built out adjoining the town.

The existing parish boundaries have not changed in decades and are out of date. This has created an anomaly that although many of the new estates are physically, practically and de facto part of the town of Morpeth they are actually located in the surrounding rural parishes on land that was previously uninhabited farmland.

Those purchasing and moving into these new properties which are marketed as part of Morpeth will assume they are part of Morpeth, use Morpeth services and are in some cases within the settlement boundary of Morpeth in planning terms but lack the political representation of a vote on the Morpeth Town Council which provides the services they use or contribute through the precept towards the services provided by the Town Council.

The Town Council therefore wishes to enter into consultation with our partner neighbouring parishes on formally amending the parish boundaries of Morpeth to reflect the reality of the increased development of the Town.

Once embarking on this potential reorganisation it also sensible to address existing anomalies such as the Stobhill Manor estate in which the parish boundary cuts through the middle of a street with half of the estate within the Parish of Morpeth and half the estate within the rural parish of Hepscott.

The Council has identified several parcels of land labelled A-F on the Plan annexed hereto (Appendix A) which it feels it is appropriate to discuss moving the boundary of Morpeth Parish to incorporate.

Any change would have no effect in planning terms or amend any of the settlement boundaries identified in the MNP.

Pros and Cons of the proposed boundary changes in general

FOR

- The parish boundaries are out of date and do not reflect the current development of the town.
- Morpeth is a Hub, and provides services enjoyed in full or part by a wider population. It should therefore maximise its revenue from those houses that are essentially part of Morpeth to fund those services.
- Changing the boundaries will protect the rural nature of the existing parish councils. For example when built out half of the inhabitants of the parish of Hepscoth will be living in suburban satellite estates of the town of Morpeth. Once the parish council's lose their distinct rural identities built around the stand alone villages and hamlets within them, they are encouraging infill and urban expansion in future Plan periods as the rural/urban division becomes blurred.
- It is appropriate that those living in what all disinterested parties would regard as the Town of Morpeth should pay precept to the Town Council of Morpeth.
- It is appropriate that those living in what all disinterested parties would regard as the Town of Morpeth should have political representation in being able to vote for Town Councillors who are responsible for those services.
- The Town Council of Morpeth is in a position to provide the services to the new estates at a better cost to the taxpayer by utilising economies of scale and the NEAT team.
- By divesting the rural parishes of the burden of maintaining the services to the new estates there would be less budgetary pressure on the parishes and less requirement for them to raise their precept.
- The fundamental injustice of one section of the town's inhabitants paying less for the services used by (in some cases their immediate) neighbours through the accident of a Victorian field line.

AGAINST

- Those already living in the affected areas may object to an increase in their parish precept to bring it line with Morpeth rates.
- There will be a financial impact on the budgets of the rural parishes.
- Parishes with current housing planning permission a loss of anticipated precept.

Plot A

This represents the land occupied by the Southfields development. Currently 126 properties are on the site, with extant planning permission for a further 292.

Hepscoth Parish Council currently receives £2,606.61 per annum in Parish precept (Appendix B) in respect of the existing properties.

FOR

- This is a substantial development which lies within the Morpeth Town settlement boundary designated in the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan but which currently lies within the parish of Hepscott.
- The development is of a suburban character and flows naturally from the neighbouring estates immediately adjacent to it.
- When completed this development will account for half of the population of the parish, endangering the parish of Hepscott's rural character.
- The majority of the development is yet to be built minimising disruption and change to existing residents as it is envisaged that any transfer process would be completed before the site is fully occupied.
- As the development is yet to be built this will not have a material effect on the current budget of Hepscott parish.

AGAINST

- Hepscott parish council are anticipating receiving this precept in the future.
- Some of the houses are occupied and therefore they will see an increase in their precept.

Conclusion

On balance Morpeth Town Council feels it is appropriate that this parcel of land be incorporated into the administrative parish of Morpeth

Plot B

This plot of land represents half of the Stobhill Manor estate. This is an established estate and represents around 114 dwellings.

Hepscott Parish Council currently receives £3,147.24 per annum in Parish precept in respect of the existing properties.

FOR

- This is a clear anomaly where the parish boundary runs through the middle of an existing estate resulting in immediate neighbours paying different levels of precept; this is a stark illustration of the unfairness of the current situation.
- The development is of a suburban character and flows naturally from the half of the estate currently within the Parish and the neighbouring estates immediately adjacent to it.
- The estate includes a children's play area which could more efficiently be managed by the Town Council. The Town Council also has the capital resources to renew the area in future beyond the capabilities of the parish council.
- The current ward of Hepscott parish has a vacancy showing a current lack of democratic accountability.

AGAINST

- Hepscott parish council are currently receiving precept from this estate.
- The houses are occupied and therefore they will see an increase in their precept.

Conclusion

On balance Morpeth Town Council feels it is appropriate that this parcel of land be incorporated into the administrative parish of Morpeth

Plot C

This plot is to the North of Morpeth in parish of Hebron and consists of the Northgate and St Andrews developments. This consists of 96 currently occupied properties and there is extant planning permission for a further 372 houses.

Hebron Parish Council currently receives £473.94 per annum in Parish precept in respect of the existing properties.

FOR

- The current parish of Hebron is the smallest of the neighbouring rural parishes with a population in 2010 of 464. The completion of the Northgate development will more than double the size of the parish forcing the parish to increase the services offered and correspondingly increase the precept paid by existing inhabitants.
- The development is of a suburban character and flows naturally from the North of Morpeth. It is not a separate settlement and with the designation and permissions in place for plots D & C it will become virtually contiguous with the town of Morpeth.

AGAINST

- Those currently living there will notice a particularly large increase in their precept.
- This is the furthest plot of land under consideration from the current boundary.

Conclusion

On balance Morpeth Town Council feels it is appropriate that this parcel of land be incorporated into the administrative parish of Morpeth

Plot D

This plot of land is designated as safeguarded for future economic development as identified in Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan. It currently has one property and no extant planning permission for future housing.

Mitford Parish Council currently receives £33.80 per annum in Parish precept in respect of the existing property.

FOR

- Adopting this piece of land would make the administrative boundary contiguous with the A1 which forms a natural physical boundary.
- There are no current residents who will object to an increase in precept.
- It will have no immediate budgetary effect on the parish council.
- When developed it is more appropriate for economic and commercial development to be within the town administration rather than in a rural parish.

AGAINST

- None identified.

Conclusion

On balance Morpeth Town Council feels it is appropriate that this parcel of land be incorporated into the administrative parish of Morpeth.

Plot E

This plot of land is within the parish of Mitford and planning permission has been granted to large scale residential and commercial development.

There is one existing property and extant planning permission for 225 houses.

Mitford Parish Council currently receive £56.33 per annum in Parish precept in respect of the existing property.

FOR

- Adopting this piece of land would make the administrative boundary contiguous with the A1 which forms a natural physical boundary the existing inhabitants of Mitford Parish are all located to the west of the A1
- There are no current residents who will object to an increase in precept.
- It will have no immediate budgetary effect on the parish council.

AGAINST

- None identified.

Conclusion

On balance Morpeth Town Council feels it is appropriate that this parcel of land be incorporated into the administrative parish of Morpeth

Plot F

This plot of land is of largely rural character and is currently within the parish of Mitford. There are 16 existing properties on the site and no extant planning permissions.

Mitford Parish Council receives £796.14 per annum in precept in respect of the existing properties.

FOR

- Adopting this piece of land would make the administrative boundary contiguous with the A1 which forms a natural physical boundary.
- There are few current residents who will object to an increase in precept.
- It will have no immediate budgetary effect on the parish council.
- Making this part of the Town will help protect this land from long term development under the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan.

AGAINST

- None identified.

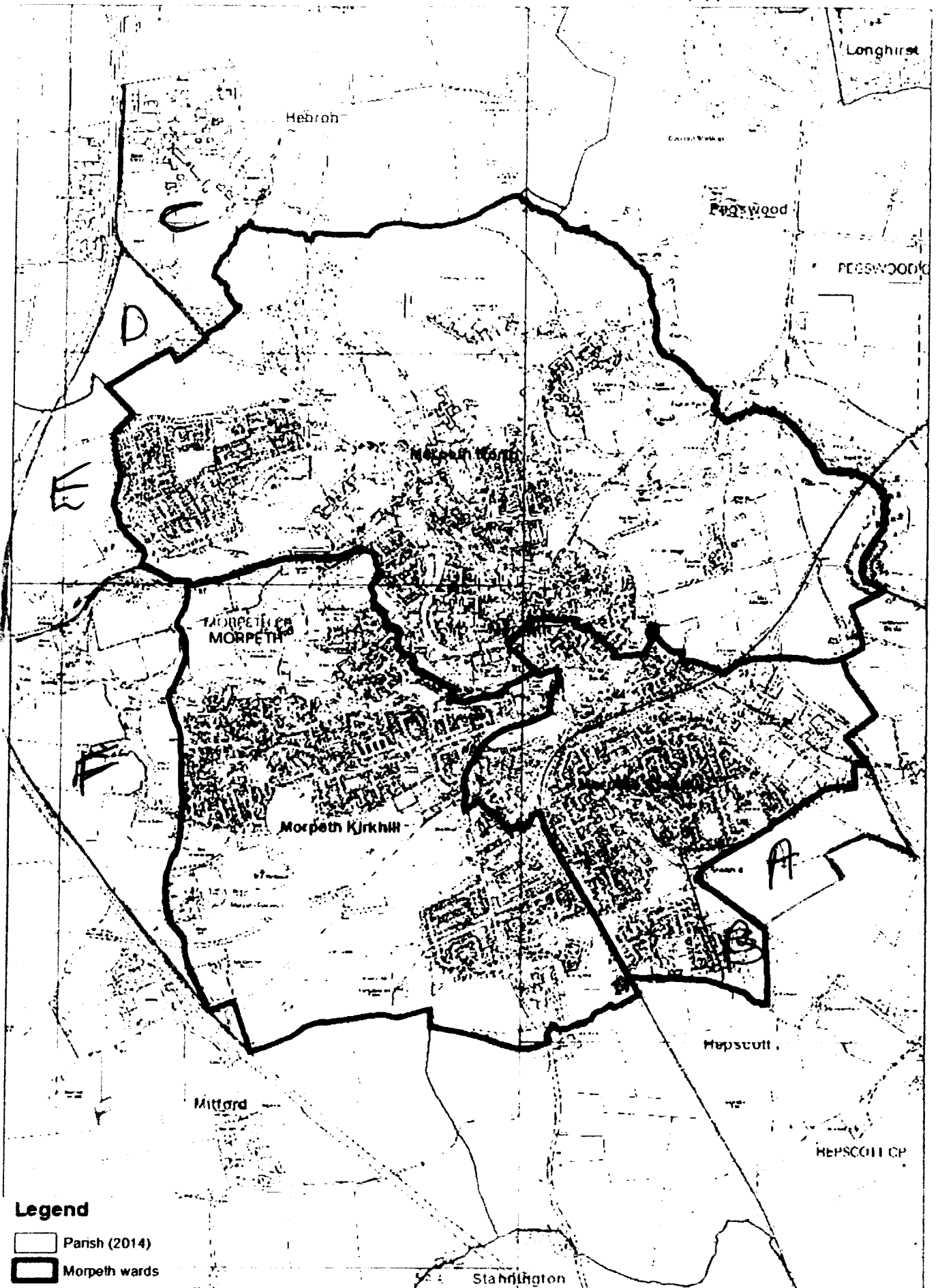
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Current Services Provided by Morpeth Town Council:

- Manages Town Hall, Storey Park and St James Community centres
- Maintains the bus shelters throughout the town
- Maintains over 200 litter and dog bins throughout the town
- Maintains over 130 seats throughout the town
- Maintains the paddling pool, playgrounds and green spaces around Morpeth. Play areas can also be found at Carlisle Park, Stobhill, Montrose Garden, Stobhill Manor, Church Walk and Boundary Drive.
- Maintains BMX track and Skate Park in Carlisle Park.
- Maintains 3 public toilets in the town.
- The Town Council own and manage the following allotment sites: Duncan Gardens, Abbots Way, Wellwood Gardens, St Marys Field. The allotment land at East Greens, Middle Greens, Allery Banks and Tommy's Field are owned by the Council however the day to day management of the allotments are undertaken by the Middle Greens and Tommy's Field Allotment Associations.
- Town Council are responsible for the purchase and maintenance of the Christmas lights in the town
- The Town Council is the primary sponsor and organiser of Morpeth's entry in the Northumbria in Bloom competitions. Working closely with partners Morpeth and District Chamber of Trade, Sanderson Arcade, Heighley Gate Garden Centre, Northumberland County Council and many voluntary organisations and individuals.
- The Town Council continues to give much needed support to local organisations in the form of Grants and Subsidies.
- Organises the Town's Remembrance Sunday Parade.
- A dedicated NEAT team who are responsible for carrying out a grounds maintenance service to Council owned land at regular intervals throughout the year. The team also carry out any other additional maintenance/repairs as and when required. Below is some of the work carried out this year.

- Plays areas maintenance/repairs highlighted from Insurance and ROSPA reports;
- Clearing vacant allotment sites;
- Installation of litter bins;
- Maintenance at the Cenotaph;
- Repair and paint walls at Terrace car park toilets;
- General maintenance/repairs at Community centres;
- Installation of seats;
- General maintenance/repairs at toilet blocks;
- Graffiti removal;
- Cleaning all street furniture;
- Preparation of In Bloom judging route i.e. weeding, removal of rubbish etc.
- Regular river inspections including monitoring the wildlife any river and other river issues, working closely with the Environment Agency and other relevant organisations.



Published November 2017 Scale: 1:14,000 Produced by the Digital Team, Information Services.
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Key Map	Parish	Current Property Count	Planned Property Count	Total Current Parish Revenue	Total NCC Revenue																																																
A	Hepscott	126	292	2,606.61	198,798.64																																																
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Morpeth
Town
Council

Tracey Bell <tracey.bell@morpeth-tc.gov.uk>

Proposed Boundary Changes

3 messages

Sheila Rowley <sheila_rowley1@btinternet.com>
To: Tracey Bell <tracey.bell@morpeth-tc.gov.uk>

15 March 2018 at 11:31

Dear Tracey

Thank you for forwarding documents related to the proposed boundary changes and please thank Rachel for attending the meeting and for dealing with the comments, criticisms and questions so professionally.

After careful consideration the Parish Council request that any decision about these proposals by the Town Council is deferred for a period of 6 months. This request is made so that the Parish Council can fully digest the information that was only disseminated to them a few hours before their meeting on Wednesday 14th March and form a considered response. In addition they wish to consult with parishioners at Northgate who will be particularly affected by the proposals.

As requested to Rachel they would want to have information regarding the increase of precept for residents, the total increase in income that would be generated should these proposals go ahead and what additional services would be funded by this extra cash or if overall payments for all residents would be reduced.

I trust you will find this request to be reasonable and appreciate that Hebron are concerned to make the right and equitable decision for all involved.

I look forward to your response.

Sheila Rowley

Clerk to Hebron Parish Council

Tracey Bell <tracey.bell@morpeth-tc.gov.uk>
To: Sheila Rowley <sheila_rowley1@btinternet.com>

15 March 2018 at 13:09

Hi Shelia

Thank you for your response I will pass this to Full Council for them to consider with the proposals.

Kind regards

Tracey

Tracey Bell

Clerk Morpeth Town Council

Town Council Offices

Town Hall

Market Place

Morpeth

Northumberland