

## COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW RESPONSES

### MORPETH

#### OBJECTIONS

56 residents completed the following proforma supplied by Hepscoth Parish Council

*"I live at ..... on [South Fields/Hepscoth Stobhill Manor]. I wish to object in the strongest terms to Morpeth Town Council's (MTC) scheme to move my estate from Hepscoth Parish into Morpeth, for the following reasons:*

- 1) *It will put up my council tax precept change by between £100--£150 pa, a six-fold increase.*
- 2) *The principle of the thing: Morpeth have not consulted with me. MTC wish to take my money from me without even asking.*
- 3) *Our petition shows that 96% of the dwellings in Hepscoth Stobhill Manor, 80% of the dwellings on South Fields do not wish our estates to move into Morpeth.*
- 4) *MTC are unable to tell me what extra services I will get.*
- 5) *MTC keep putting up council tax; Hepscoth have passed on savings back to residents.*
- 6) *MTC's proposals will have a major impact on the remaining residents of Hepscoth Parish. Hepscoth will have to double its precept charge on all remaining properties or see its income half. We do not want to be the cause of that.*
- 7) *The aims of MTC seem to be purely monetary. I believe that MTC will makes tens of thousands of points per year out of annexing our estates. Why should I have my precept charge increased 6-fold?*

*Yours sincerely..... Date ....."*

#### **Some returned the above but also added further comments as follows:-**

"In addition, I would also comment as follows:

1. MTC claim that "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". This is both a derisory and arrogant statement: where is the irrefutable evidence that MTC gives better value for money than small parishes? What guarantee is MTC giving that their precept will not be raised as soon as this land grab is accomplished? It is a contemptible (but consistent) attitude for MTC to adopt.
2. This is a further blatant example of MTC pursuing any avenue which presents, to them, an opportunity to grab revenue without having any regard for residents (of their own or others): their proposals for St James Community Centre in Morpeth is just one recent example where the continual MTC "lust for cash" completely disregards and outweighs any consideration for the existing long-term users of the Centre, who are to be summarily ejected from their long-term home.

3. Is this “Big Neighbour Takeover” syndrome now to become the accepted policy and the approved way forward of Northumberland County Council (NCC) whereby small parish councils are to be slowly starved of funds until they can no longer exist? Indeed, if this MTC proposal is approved, what is the point of continuing with my Hepscoth Parish Council?
4. Does NCC actually believe in diversity, small scale localism and choice whereby residents in small parish councils can contribute, through their Precept payment, to their locale and are encouraged to join in and feel appreciated for their individual community participation?
5. Is NCC prepared, in this particular matter, to uphold the first of their four new values, approved at their 29.04.19 Cabinet meeting: “RESIDENTS FIRST”? If NCC really does believe in this published value (rather than a “lip service” superficial adherence), the overwhelming democratic vote from the petitions, mentioned in point 3 above, must be respected by NCC and this MTC scheme rejected.
6. This proposal by MTC should not be viewed by NCC as an isolated or “one-off” issue. The NCC decision here will, inevitably, substantially shape the opinions and attitudes of many residents towards NCC.

Goodwill, trust and confidence in any Authority are all hard to win and should not be lightly discarded. Also, the democratic process does really matter to residents and this proposal by MTC, must be firmly rejected.”

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“I am in total disagreement with this proposal and feel that the remit of small parish councils should not be eroded as they play an important part in the community.”

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“This does not appear to be a review which is where a formal assessment of a subject is made and at the end of that process a decision is made as to what change, if any, may be needed. It would appear you have taken a decision and made your own judgement about what suits MTC and are now holding a hidden, meaningless “consultation”. As an observer of this process I would conclude that this is because you have to be seen to be consulting in case questions are asked later, not because you have any interest or intention of acting on any response.”

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“In conclusion it appears that although our services will remain the same, MTC are, without even informing us or asking our opinions aiming to take a chunk of land from Hepscoth parish purely because the land has had homes built on it and is therefore now worth lots of money to them.”

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“Please leave Hepscoth alone we wish to be a separate entity to Morpeth and we pay a high enough council tax with little in the way of services as it is.”

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“This proposal owes nothing to local democracy or natural justice: you should rise to your title of ‘Democratic Services’ and *actively* consult affected residents.

If they had courage of their convictions, MTC would put the proposal to a local plebiscite. They would never do that because they are well aware of the potential result - so they have resorted to underhand tactics and passive “consultation”. NOT ACCEPTABLE, EVER.

The entire proposal is wrong and flawed on far too many levels.

Please reject the militant advances of the MTC.

### **No Extra Taxation Without Justification”**

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“Finally, we are quite happy with the way Hepscoth parish operate and as is said, ‘if it isn’t broken – don’t fix it”

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“I am writing as a parishioner of Hepscoth village to object strongly to the proposed boundary changes on the grounds that they are unnecessary, undemocratic, and serve no positive purpose for the residents of Hepscoth Parish.”

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### **27 INDIVIDUAL LETTERS AND E-MAILS WERE RECEIVED AS FOLLOWS:-**

“As you are aware Fairmoor has been part of Hebron Parish for many years. My husband and I live on the west side of Fairmoor and looking at the proposals there appears to be not change for residents living to the west of the A1.

For the majority of people living in Fairmoor we have no links to Hebron whatsoever, but we do have links to Mitford. I believe consideration should be given to the west side of Fairmoor being transferred to Mitford Parish? Both Mitford and houses to the west of Fairmoor have similar issues such as boundaries shared with the A1 and related problems with Highways England. Fairmoor is within walking distance of Mitford and has a Church, a public house, a cricket club and a local community centre; all are well supported by the residents off Fairmoor.

Hebron is not within easy walking distance, made more difficult due to the A1 and lack of a public footpath.

I do not accept the argument that residents of Fairmoor benefit from the proximity to Morpeth. If you use this argument then the dissolution of smaller Parishes would disappear completely. I believe this is about finances, Morpeth Town Council have

now decided that the income from the new development at Fairmoor would significantly benefit Morpeth Town Council to the detriment of Hebron and Mitford Parishes.

This move would split Fairmoor into two separate Parishes, creating confusion and potential overlap.

Shouldn't we be supporting the smaller Parishes? not stripping them of the additional income that would help to provide much needed services such as additional street cleaning, and grass cutting.

Our preference would be for all of Fairmoor from the roundabout to be transferred to Mitford Parish as a whole.”

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“My wife and I are octogenarians who have lived in Hepscoth for nearly 40 years.

Some people might assume that because we live in Hepscoth we are rich people but they would be wrong.

We both worked long days, seven days a week for 46 years in our newsagents business before we retired 16 years ago. We had very little family time and very few holidays. This is how we bought our house. Our house and garden are our greatest pleasure in our retirement.

We understand that without consulting us, as residents of Hepscoth, MTC is to take over South Fields and Hepscoth Stobhill Manor with all the money generated from Council Tax.

We in Hepscoth were overruled when we voted against the building of the huge estate at South Fields and the possible effect it would have on the village with flooding.

Now without consultation you are to annex these two estates, which will increase our rates. We think it grossly unfair that as pensioners on a fixed income, people in our situation were not taken into consideration when this decision was made.

Our Parish Council has done a great job in looking after the needs of the people in this Parish. They need the money from these rates to continue doing so, without having to higher our rates when some of us can no more afford it than people living in Morpeth.”

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“I represent the Northumberland County Council Division of Longhorsley which includes Hepscoth Parish and Mitford Parish.

Both are served by two excellent and conscientious Parish Councils.

Their meetings are held regularly and are open to the public.

Members of each reflect a cross section of the communities they serve. The members are hard working and care very much for their local areas.

Relationships between the County Council and the two Parish Councils are strong and there are many examples of good cross working both at respective member and officer level.

When concerns arise that require input from Northumberland County Council such as issues around speeding traffic, for example, the County Council react quickly and efficiently to bring about remedies.

Similarly when there are problems with planning matters, road defects or fly tipping, for example, the relationship between each Parish Council and the County Council is such that queries and issues are dealt with speedily and efficiently.

This dialogue and partnership working between the County and the Parish Councils is strong and effective.

Because it is so important, I feel sure that the issue of Council Tax precept will be covered in detail elsewhere but the key point remains that each Parish Council provides an excellent service for a very modest precept. A change in the current arrangements would result in a significant increase in precept for no obvious benefit for some, and a balancing increase for those remaining within the current Parish boundaries.

I feel that this would be patently unfair on both groups of residents.

Finally, the most crucial test is how residents feel about the review. The overwhelming evidence that I have heard and seen is that local people are content with the present arrangements.

It seems the majority want no change.

Their views must be paramount in this.”

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“My name is \*\*\*\*\* and for 20 years have lived in the village part of Hepscott. Previously I lived on Lancaster Park and therefore have a great deal of affection for Morpeth and want it to do well in the future.

However, this proposal reminds me of the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment. “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, ...thy neighbour’s wife, ..nor anything that is thy neighbour’s”. Those who want to poach these coveted Hepscott homes appear to want to raise lots of extra cash for Morpeth Town Council. I say appear as MTC hasn’t had the courtesy to inform me of their proposal. It will of course affect my purse as Hepscott Parish Council will have to raise its taxes.

And in exchange for all this extra money? Well I do enjoy the Christmas lights and activities in Carlisle Park, but in exchange I spend money in Morpeth shops, hairdressers, dentists, pharmacies, Market and cafes.

Others who don't hold Morpeth in the same affection will be tempted by this increase in Council Tax to make use of the excellent bus service to Blyth market, easier free parking in Cramlington and with the improvement to the railway, links to the Metro Centre and beyond.

I have no intention of breaking the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment but do want transparency. I think it the role of Northumberland County Council to explain how the proposed boundary changes will affect the democratic process. Who will represent these new Morpethians-both on MTC and NCC? One of the reasons Hepscoth thrives and is able to prevent its spending spiralling out of control, is its non-party political parish council. Will new Morpeth councillors have to be members of a political party? How much has this proposal cost Northumberland County Council to consider? How much would it cost NCC to implement? There are many such questions.

Thank you for reading my letter and I urge N.C.C. to reject this suggestion and follow its own entreaty in the 2018-2021 Plan : "We want you to love where you live".

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"I wish to strongly oppose the potential amendment of the Hepscoth parish boundary, especially as a local resident I have not been consulted on this far-reaching matter.

I further object to the intended change as it will increase my personal council tax by £88.89 pa, for no additional services."

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"My husband and I have lived in Hepscoth for 33 years and we object that we have not been consulted regarding council tax changes. We do not agree with any changes and everything should left as it is.

Please note our strong objection"

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"Parish Councils have in the past been derided, ignored and marginalised by bigger brother Authorities.

This specific proposal that, 'we can do it better' by our neighbouring Parish Council of Morpeth is false. We say it is too big for its small boots - and shallow pockets. It financially overreaches itself and egotistically takes on tasks which have previously ended in failure for its community and falsely claims benefit for work done by other activists. We hope NCC as an independent arbitrator will find this out.

Our Hepscoth Parish Council take on tasks: administration; advisory; networking and actions; which benefit our local community and the Morpeth Hub at large. This is within its capability, experience and budget: using a team of gifted, truly amateur enthusiasts and a part time clerk; all working effectively and willingly well above their expected workload.

The Parish Council of Morpeth Town has shown no consultation of evidential value and its views in this matter of boundary creep are highly suspect. We urge you to examine the survey results provided by Hepscoth Parish Council in your proportionate balanced inquiry which highlights the well proven case for keeping our existing boundaries secure."

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"This statement below appears on your website:

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/News/2020/Jan/Views-sought-on-proposed-boundary-changes-to-Morpe.aspx>

*"Morpeth Town Council also feels it is in a position to provide services to the new housing estates at a better cost to the taxpayer by utilising economies of scale and the council's Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams. 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".*

a) First sentence: If I'm not mistaken, the Neighbourhood Environmental Action Teams and street cleaning are a County Council function and *not* as implied here a town council function. And what services are they "in a position to provide"? Not a single Town Councillor has bothered to come to the parish and explain anything about this face to face.

b) Second sentence: Hepscoth Parish does not have 'budgetary pressure'. If it does, why is there a recent pattern of low or reduced annual precepts?

2019-20 precept *reduced* 8.4%.  
2018-19 precept *reduced* 9.4%  
2017-18 precept *increased* 1.4% (CPI was 2.6%)  
2016-17 precept *increased* 1% (CPI was 0.7%)

Does Morpeth town council match this record?.

This proposal is shameless and opportunistic money-grabbing bid at parish residents' expense. The town council has not demonstrated or explained any real benefits to parish residents of this take-over. The statement above is woolly and lacks specific costs and benefits.

I chose to live in Hepscoth parish 20 years ago specifically because it *wasn't* part of Morpeth. I do not work in, rarely visit or shop in the town and use very few of the town facilities.

Hepscoth Parish provide good value and good facilities in a fiscally responsible manner.

*"Morpeth is a hub which provides services enjoyed by a wider population and the town council would like to ensure that in so far as is practical and sensible it recovers*

*the cost of providing these services, through the town council precept charge, by those who use them".*

The MTC website <https://www.morpeth-tc.gov.uk/services/>

Services - Morpeth Town Council

Morpeth Town Council provides a variety of services efficiently, promptly and cost effectively. For more information on the services we provide, please choose from the list below:

[www.morpeth-tc.gov.uk](http://www.morpeth-tc.gov.uk)

lists 22 Town Council functions of which I use or participate in one - the toilets and even they are closed by the evening hours when I often have most need of them.

Most of the rest will never appear, be needed in or are relevant to our part of the estate. Many of its services are chargeable at the point of use and most of the others are not recurring revenue expenses that can justify £100 - £150pa more from every household in the usurped parishes.

Why should we now be expected to subsidize this higher spending Council?

Northumberland County Council should be encouraged to reject this flawed and covetous proposal."

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"I wish to object to the application from Morpeth Town Council for the transfer of Hepscott Parish estates at South Fields and Stobhill Manor from Hepscott Parish to Morpeth. The residents of these estates have overwhelmingly expressed a wish to remain in Hepscott Parish and will gain no benefit from the transfer. MTC showed no interest in this land when it was fields and can only want the transfer to increase their revenue. I also strongly to the fact that this boundary change was pre-empted by a move of the 'Welcome to Morpeth' sign approximately 700m along the A192 some time ago.

ALL existing residents of Hepscott Parish would be affected by this change. It would mean either a reduction in services or an increase in precept charge for remaining residents. As a resident of Hepscott village since 1970, I have not been consulted by MTC and object strongly to the large increase in precept charge which would be required if this boundary change takes place.

I request that NCC reject this boundary change in line with the wishes of the residents of Hepscott Parish."

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“Morpeth Town Council wish to ‘amend’ its boundaries with Hepscoth, Hebron and Mitford Parish Councils. By ‘amend’ it means extend its town boundary. This means some changes to County Council electoral divisions – the area marked C on the map (Stobhill Manor and the developing South Fields estates) has already become part of Morpeth Stobhill ED but remains a ward of Hepscoth Parish. The division of Hepscoth Parish into two wards was argued on a fairer distribution of electors and a more discernible boundary -although it covered Stobhill Manor and empty fields marked by a barbed wire fence at the time. Since then a line of trees have been planted and a sign proclaiming “Welcome to Morpeth” erected and an extension of the 30 mph limit to this ward boundary of Hepscoth. I objected to all these “moves” and would have moved the offending sign to its proper boundary beyond the roundabout (which is also in the parish of Hepscoth) were I not restrained from doing so.

As a consequence of this history I am not too surprised by this recent move to usurp Area C from Hepscoth Parish especially now it is, or soon will be, the home of over 500 council tax payers. This boundary move would mean the parish precept of approximately 800 house-holders will then be met by 325 house-holders paying more than double the present level. It is estimated that the relocated holders will pay £100-£150 per annum more. There will be **NO CHANGES in services or advantages to ANY residents from both Hepscoth wards for this increase in council tax.**

**The only body to gain by it is Morpeth Town Council.**

There are no recent reviews of this nature but with the expansion on the perimeters of many towns and villages in Northumberland there may well be similar request from towns such as Alnwick, Hexham, Wooler, Berwick and larger villages who would relish funds from their close neighbours.

There is an undeveloped field included in the transfer from Hepscoth to Morpeth. If this transfer goes ahead there is little doubt that this will be developed. There have already been attempts to build there. This means that Morpeth is creeping ever closer to the village of Hepscoth. There needs to be a **county strategy** to limit the extent of urban sprawl into the country side while there is still a chance to maintain the nucleated settlements as separate entities and not become incorporated within urban districts. Northumberland deserves to retain its attractive pattern of small towns and villages even if that means a greater concentration of homes within the settlement boundaries.

If this action of Morpeth is successful and there are future demands to build close to the town but outside the boundary will that result in new wider boundaries spreading in ever increasing circles around our towns?

I have studied the contents of the Cabinet Portfolios and cannot find who is responsible for Community Governance. I feel that the all county councillors should be aware that this request may affect them and their electorate sometime soon and some deep thought should go into devising a strong policy.

Morpeth Town Council have listed their reasons for requesting this move. Some may seem to be valid but I do not agree that the absorbing neighbouring estates/settlements is the only or fairest way of supporting a town or village that is a service centre. The county council could help with special funding for “service centre towns and villages” (grants, specific allocations, etc) paid for by the whole county council tax payers not just the immediate neighbours.

I hope this matter receives the attention due to it as it affects more than Morpeth and its neighbours.”

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“I am writing to register my objection to the proposed boundary changes to Hepscoth Parish, which seek to move South Fields and Stobhill Manor to Morpeth Town Council.

There has been no communication from Morpeth Town Council (MTC) as to what benefits will arise from the change for either Hepscoth residents, or for the wider community. I am however informed by Hepscoth Parish Council (HPC) that the precept charge for remaining Hepscoth residents will increase considerably as a result. As mentioned, there has been no communication from MTC so I have no reason to dispute this.

The proposed change therefore appears to be little more than an attempt by MTC to gain additional council tax revenue, subsidised by remaining HPC residents, who will have to pay more to maintain the same services.

It is also disappointing that Northumberland County Council has not consulted directly with Hepscoth residents on this issue; the only communication has been from HPC, which has made the effort to draw residents' attention to this consultation.”

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“I have recently moved into South Fields, Stobhill, Morpeth and have been advised that Northumberland County Council are proposing to move the boundaries and thus moving us from Hepscoth Parish to Morpeth Parish. This would cause monetary increases, I believe, and I would like to know on what grounds this is being proposed. Could someone kindly advise me of the benefits to me, as a householder, to compensate for the increase in council tax?”

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“As residents of Hepscoth village we strongly object to Morpeth Town Council's proposal to annex the new housing at South Fields and Stobhill Manor, a proposal which Morpeth Town Council has not had the courtesy or nerve to put to us directly. This omission strongly suggests that their case is weak and the proposal speculative. As undoubtedly the proposal if implemented would be to the detriment of every household in Hepscoth parish surely the Town Council should be compelled to produce its case for the tax increase. To adapt the longstanding principle - no taxation without justification.”

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“I note with considerable concern, the proposed annexation by Morpeth Town Council of the Hepscoth Stobhill Manor and South Fields estates. There has already been overwhelming rejection of this proposal by the two named estates and the financial burden which it will impose on both these estates and the village of Hepscoth is completely unacceptable. When one reads of the difficulty Morpeth

would appear to be having in satisfying medical and educational services. adding to their geographical area would seem to be foolhardy at the least and this application should certainly be rejected. Please would you ensure that this letter is included in any considerations by the Northumberland County Council. Many Thanks”

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“I live at \*\*\*\*\*, Hepscoth.

I wish to object in the strongest terms to Morpeth Town Council's scheme to annex South Fields and Stobhill Manor from Hepscoth Parish. These two areas have always formed part of Hepscoth Parish and should remain so.

The vast majority of residents in South Fields and Stobhill Manor have voiced their desire to remain within Hepscoth Parish and their wishes should be considered and acted upon.

The proposed annexation of these two areas would impose an additional financial burden on all residents of Hepscoth which is totally unwarranted.”

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“I am writing to add my name to the list of "objectors" to the Hepscoth Land grab that is proposed.

I believe that this is opportunistic, and a way of circumnavigating funds to Morpeth Town council, and diverting much needed funds from the villages, including Hepscoth.

As I write this I feel that the decision has probably already been made to go ahead, and that the requests for people to give their views is merely a "ticky box" operation to say people have been "consulted"...

lets hope it is not that...”

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“We are writing to protest in the strongest terms about Morpeth Town Council’s (MTC) attempt to get changes made in longstanding parish boundaries.

POINT 1 There has been no contact made by MTC to any of the people whose council tax precept will be affected. No consultation with those living in new estates whose CT/P will go up or those whose services will of necessity be reduced without a large increase in CT/P. TOTALLY UNDEMOCRATIC BEHAVIOUR.

POINT 2 It will put up Hepscoth precept (HP) unless there is a severe reduction in services provided by Hepscoth Parish Council (HPC).

POINT 3 This behaviour by MTC could be straight out of Moscow circa the Stalinist era. Do we or do we not live in a country where democracy is respected? NO CONSULTATION - PURE MONEY GRABBING.

POINT 4 Matters like this should be decided by a democratic vote with those affected being given the opportunity to decide what they wish for - after hearing the case for change from MTC OR HPC.”

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“As a resident of Abbey Mills, Mitford, Morpeth I wish to register my objection to the proposed new boundary change between Mitford and Morpeth and agree with all points raised by Mitford Parish Council to support their argument.”

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“I am a resident of Hepscott Village and would like to add my voice against the proposal to change the boundary of Hepscott Parish taking sections of Stobhill into Morpeth Town Council and out of Hepscott.

These changes will disadvantage all of the residents of Hepscott Parish, both those moving in to MTC and those remaining Hepscott. Costs of council tax will have to increase for everyone for no gain.

I strongly urge that NCC refuse this proposal. “

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“I wish to comment on the proposals made by Morpeth TC to review boundaries that involve Hepscott, Hebron and Mitford parishes. I am a resident of Hepscott Village and a previous Parish Councillor of Hepscott.

I'd like to address the points made by Morpeth TC in their original submission.

***it believes that current parish boundaries are out of date and do not reflect the current development of the town***

This is a fair comment and some effort needs to be made to assess the boundaries. However the whole area surrounding Morpeth has undergone some form of redevelopment that has affected all the surrounding parishes. It seems to me that that each parish should be allowed to develop their own Parish taking into account the new developments and upgrading services as appropriate. It can do this if funding is available from their respective precept.

As far as Hepscott is concerned this should result in the upgrade of some services for the new Barratts Estate to the North and the development of the community centre in the village for use for the new residents. This is particularly of concern as Morpeth are in the process of reducing community centres in the immediate area of the village and perhaps more importantly near the new developments. Plans are afoot to close Storey Park and relocate services to the center of town. This, in my mind, makes the provision of services to the whole of the new development more difficult and a case should be made to allow Hepscott to develop as the new estates grow.

To my mind the boundaries formed by the A 192 and the A 196 should be the natural border of the Parish, though I would not seek to see the residents of Stobhill and the

small area of the new development at Choppington moved without some form of democratic consent.

Geographically I would also argue that the natural divisions formed by the Wansbeck and Blyth river valleys suggest there is more sense for the new Barratts estate at the junction of A 192 & 196 should be within Hepscoth. As an example I would cite the example of flood defenses. The recent funding for flood defenses in Morpeth naturally focused on the flooding of the Wansbeck but failed to take into account the current Hepscoth Parish area that overflow into tributaries that feed the Blyth. To my mind this is an example of the greater need suborning the lesser need of a minority, something that the future development of Hepscoth should go a long way to rescind.

***Morpeth is a hub and provides services enjoyed in full or part by a wider population. It should, therefore, seek to ensure that in so far as is practical and sensible it recovers the cost of providing these services by those who use them.***

Yes it is a hub but I would expect Morpeth to develop services that attracts spending into that hub not to force funding into the area that may be detrimental to the surrounding parishes. I would also like to see a breakdown of costs associated with the new developments and where actual expenditure is being undertaken. My own intuitive views are that Morpeth expends funding for the center of Morpeth with disproportionate spending patterns for those that live on the outside of the town.

***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.***

There are no disinterested parties among the residents of the Parishes of the outlying districts of Morpeth. The idea that these residents should pay precept is based on the views of the Town Council. They do not represent the constituent members of the outlying Parishes and should not be the decision makers of the process that has these residents arbitrarily moved. Due democratic process that is both accountable and transparent should mean a process that sets out the views of all and allows the residents to chose.

***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 idea that the Parishes do not provide political representation is frankly an insult. I know the outlying Parishes regard Morpeth as a dominant factor in any decision making they make and strive to cooperate with the Town Council whilst still maintaining an independent view on local needs. I fail to see how political subordination would improve this.

***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.***

I have seen no evidence that this is correct and would like the Review to examine and consult with the Parishes on this matter. The fact that the Hepscoth precept is lower suggests we provide the better service to taxpayers.

***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 Hepscott precept is lower than Morpeth. There is no evidence that we would have to increase the precept and as far as I am aware there is no budgetary pressure to increase it. I am aware that amalgamation is likely to lead to an increased 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 would be resolved.'***

This is political speak and I would pay no attention to the emotive issues it attempts to argue. I would like to take one example to demonstrate that it can be argued the other way around. Hepscott Hall as a community center provides services for all residences and non-residents. Bridge Clubs, Art Clubs, Exercise Clubs, Coffee Mornings and entertainment events all flourish at the Hall. Most of the individuals who subscribe to these Clubs and events are not residents of the Parish but tend to come from the greater environs of the Morpeth area. Hepscott is part of a greater whole that in the past has dealt with development issues through cooperation. It is not for the Town Council to describe us in terms of the accident of a Victorian field line. It is our responsibility to develop the same pride of the parish area in our new neighbours, something that is achievable in the longer term.

It would be wrong for the TC to consider amalgamation without taking into account the views of the residents who would be directly affected. I am of the view that this could only be achieved through a ballot process. I am aggrieved that the TC has not informed Parish residents of the nature of this consideration. If my own Hepscott Parish representative had not informed me of it, I would still be unaware. This to me is more of a fundamental injustice than that of any perpetrated by a Victorian field line.

I have heard that Morpeth Town Council have proposed to take over the council remit for my estate, which would result in extra charges with no help in cutting unfair new build maintenance charges and lack of equality of services for new build home owners.

I wish you to record my disapproval of this not only for the above reasons but for what I see as an attempt to push ahead this change without proper consultation against clear opposition from residents and lack of democratic accountability."

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"I'd like to formerly object to the proposed changes to the council boundaries.

This will increase my council tax and alter the Parish boundaries, no doubt leading to further house building without improvement to existing infrastructure.

The changes to taxation will not be insignificant.

I am strongly opposed to any planned changes and must ask why this has suddenly come about?

This leaves those without additional insight to speculate, this is only for fiscal benefits and possibly for land grab, to open further green fields for the profit of house builders and board members of such inequitable companies, exploiting the neoliberal market.”

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“My husband and I wish to object to this proposal which amounts to a ‘land grab’ of potentially valuable Parish Council land in order to increase the Town Council’s precept income.

Hepscott Parish could not continue to look after it’s residents on its current tax precept charge.

We have lived in Hepscott Parish for nearly 50 years and have always been extremely well served by our Parish Council. They have listened to everyone’s views and acted in our interests. They have managed to support the area on a very limited budget and have given us value for money.

This could change drastically if Morpeth Town Council annexes the aforesaid land.

It is estimated that Hepscott will have to double its present precept charge if we lose this part of the parish.

The Northumberland County Council should give considerable weight to the views of satisfied Hepscott residents over the blatantly obvious financial gains which motivate the Town Council.

It would be a tragedy for Hepscott to be steamrolled by a larger greedy authority.

How would this reflect on Northumberland County Council? “

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“I wish to register my objection to the proposal by Morpeth Town Council to annex the estates of South Fields and Hepscott Stobhill Manor which at the moment lie within the boundary of Hepscott Parish.

My objections are on the grounds that in so doing the Council Tax charge to the remaining residents of Hepscott Parish will in effect have to double we are going to be able to sustain the level of basic services required to maintain the standards in our area.

I do hope that you will register my objection to this proposal.”

## **SUPPORT**

30 completed the following proforma supplied by Morpeth Town Council.

*Consultation on parish/town council boundaries*

*Name  
Address  
Postcode*

*Consultation on administrative boundaries:  
Hebron/Hepscott/Mitford Parish and Morpeth Town Council*

*I wish to make the following comments on the proposed boundary reviews for the  
above parish/town*

*.....*

*Regarding the 3 proposals I wish to register the following*

|   | <i>Agreed</i> | <i>Object</i> |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| <i>Changes to Hepscott/Morpeth Boundary</i> |               |               |
| <i>Changes to Mitford/Morpeth Boundary</i>  |               |               |
| <i>Changes to Hebron/Morpeth Boundary</i>   |               |               |

*Signature .....*

The following additional comments were added to some of the above proforma

“All new estates and existing surrounding parishes enjoy all the benefits that Morpeth offers, therefore, such estates and parishes should be expected to pay the same rates as residents of the town proper.”

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New housing should contribute to the upkeep of town facilities at the same rate.

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**FOUR INDIVIDUAL LETTERS AND E-MAILS WERE RECEIVED AS FOLLOWS:-**

“I am writing in support of the proposed boundary change to hepscott parish.

I am a resident of Southfields which will be affected by the proposed change.

I think that everybody who lives in these new satellite estates and use Morpeth as their primary town should contribute towards that town and not benefit from paying a tiny parish precept for a hamlet or village they never attend or use facilities in.”

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“My home is located at the junction of Shields Road and Choppington Road and I have lived here for over 30 years.

During this time Hepscoth Parish Council (HPC) have contributed nothing to my quality of life. Periodically I receive a leaflet outlining the enhancements being made to Hepscoth Village. Not once has the Parish considered how it could improve my circumstance and as a consequence it has fallen on Northumberland County Council (NCC) to meet my needs.

I can well understand HPC's concern at losing revenue from Stobhill Manor and South Fields as this will seriously impact on their ability to fund self serving schemes. This is of no concern to me."

"Please note that I am **fully in favour** of the proposed boundary change and would like to take the opportunity to thank NCC for all the good work that it has done in making Morpeth such a pleasant place to call home."

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"I am agreement with all the proposed boundary changes."

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"I agree with all 3 proposed boundary changes."

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"All of this will need to be ongoing given the projected housebuilding proposals in the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan."