



Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Event Report

21 May 2016



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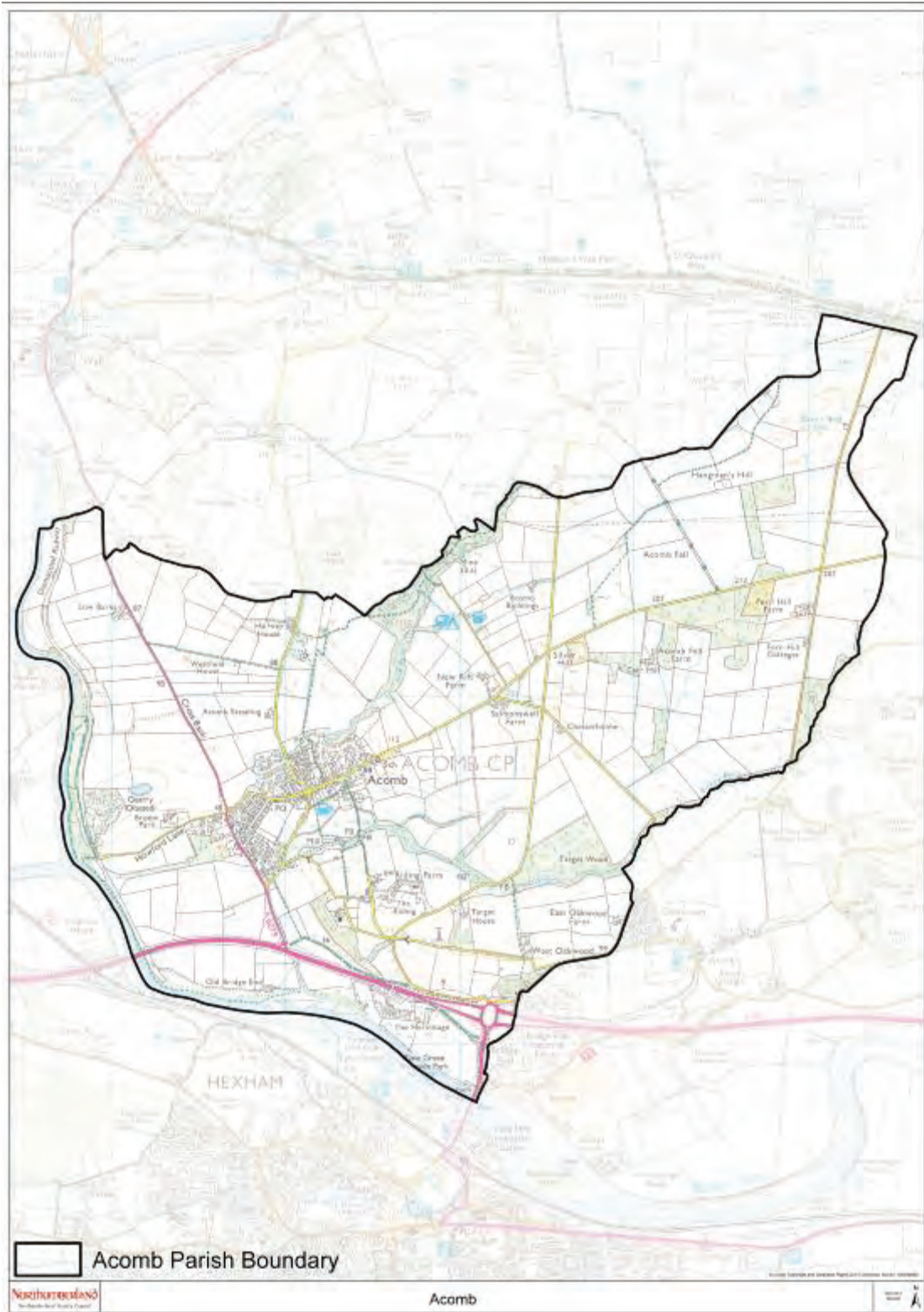
1. Introduction

This report provides a summary of the recent community engagement event undertaken by Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in respect of neighbourhood planning. The consultation event sought the views of the public using a variety of formats, including: feedback postcards; feedback leaflets; feedback boards; and a mapping exercise. The resulting responses received through the community engagement process will be used to help inform the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

1.1. Background

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011, and gives communities the opportunity to shape and define how land-use in their area should grow and change in the future. Neighbourhood planning is a process, which in Northumberland is led by Town and Parish Councils with input from the local community and the support of the County Council. Neighbourhood plans must be in line with national and local planning policy, and in most cases a Steering Group would be established to lead plan preparation.

The decision to partake in a Neighbourhood Plan was made by Acomb Parish Council in June 2015. In October 2015, after much discussion and consultation, the Parish Council agreed to create its own Neighbourhood Plan, rather than joining with Hexham. The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was established in November 2015. Subsequently, an application for area designation was submitted. The area designation was approved in November 2015, and covers the area of Acomb Parish (See below).



Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation

2. Engagement

2.1. Purpose of community engagement

It was recognised by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group that early community engagement was the most effective method of identifying the Vision and Objectives that the Neighbourhood Plan should cover, and that public consultation would play a significant role in Plan preparation. The purpose of the engagement event was to raise awareness of the opportunities to the community presented by neighbourhood planning and to engage with as broad a range of people from the local community as possible right at the start of the planning process.

This consultation was supported by data analysis of a Parish wide questionnaire, delivered and collected from households in the month of November 2014, (with a 56% return rate) which was conducted by Action4Acomb. This information, along with several other consultation events, including the 14 May Community Led Plan (CLP) event, has also underpinned the content of Acomb's Community Led Plan.

The resulting feedback from both recent engagement activities will enable the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to focus on the key land-use issues which impact on the quality of community life, and help to shape a future vision for Acomb.

2.2. Process of community engagement

The decision to undertake a consultation event was taken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It was agreed that this would take place on Saturday 21st May 2016.

The consultation event was publicised in advance in the May edition of Acomb Parish Council's Newsletter which was delivered to each household in the Parish. Details were also given in the Hexham Courant Village Notes section on three separate weeks in the run-up to the event. Invitation posters were displayed on notice boards at the Post Office, Village Hall, Pit Heap, the three local pubs and the churches, as well as posted on Action4Acomb's Face Book page and website. Flyers were distributed to parents of children at Acomb First School and Little Oaks Nursery, as well as to the businesses on Acomb Industrial Estate. A further distribution was made door to door around parts of the village. The purpose of these promotions was to publicise the event widely and to ensure that as many Acomb Parish residents as possible had the opportunity to attend and actively contribute to the early stages of the plan-making process. The local County Councillor and representatives of neighbouring Parishes were also invited. In addition, Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group also invited the public to provide comments and suggestions through its website, www.acombneighbourhoodplan.co.uk

The launch event was planned and managed by members of the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, with officers from the Communities and Infrastructure Team at Northumberland County Council providing assistance.

Engagement activities comprised of the following:

- Display Boards summarising the Neighbourhood Plan Process (Appendices A.1, A.2.1 and A.2.2).
- Display Boards inviting addition of “Post-its” to highlight good and not so good points about living and working in Acomb (Appendix A.3.1)
- Vision Feedback Board (inviting comments on the Vision for Acomb) (Appendices A.4.1 and A.4.2)
- Map and Feedback Board (inviting good /bad stickers and comments by location) (Appendices A.5.1 and A.5.2)
- Neighbourhood Plan Key Themes (Appendix A.6)
- Feedback Cards (Appendix A.7)

2.3. Engagement Activities

2.3.1. Thinking About Land-Use Issues – good/not so good in Acomb

This activity involved members of the public identifying both good and not so good features of living and working in Acomb. Post-it notes (Noted in Appendix A.3.2) were used to represent the views of the public, with event attendees adding their views to the Feedback Board.

2.3.2. Your Vision

Members of the public were invited to make suggestions for a Vision for the parish. Ideas from the Action4Acomb community survey were displayed to give inspiration. Suggestions were logged on Flipchart Pages (Appendix A.4.2), for further analysis.

2.3.3 Mapping The Issues

Sticky Red and Green Dots were supplied to enable attendees to identify good and bad issues, by location within the Parish. The dots were numbered and referenced to the comment (Appendix A.5.3) which was captured in a separate log.

2.3.4. Neighbourhood Plan Key Themes

The Key Themes relating to the Neighbourhood Plan were displayed on a separate poster. Attendees were invited to review these themes and make any observations to the Steering Group

2.3.5. Feedback Card

Members of the public who attended the consultation event were encouraged to complete feedback cards which asked respondents what three changes they would like to see in Acomb (Noted in Appendix A.7.2). This activity was carried out to help establish local community aspirations and priorities

2.3.6. Conversation Capture

Where issues were raised through conversations with members of the public during the event, feedback was captured by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and officers of the Northumberland County Council Communities and Infrastructure Team. These were subsequently added to overall comments.

2.3.7 Further Contact

As far as was possible Email addresses were collected from attendees, to enable easier future contact if necessary.

2.4. Attendance

There was a total of 16 attendees to the consultation including members of the Whittington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

3. Consultation Findings

Feedback received from the Neighbourhood Plan consultation event, the various Action4Acomb consultations and from other sources has been collated for review by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. This has identified a significant number of topic areas, some of which are not appropriate for the NP to address, and will be addressed by the Community-Led Plan. Recurring issues have been themed. The Key Themes include:

3.1 Natural Environment

- Ensure Renewable Energy Schemes do not spoil the environment
- Manage Flooding Issues throughout the Village

3.2 Transport – Roads and Paths

- Improve A69/A6079 Junction (Dangerous)
- Resolve Pinch-point issues on Garden House Bank
- Create/improve more Footpaths/Bridle Paths in the area and into Hexham
- Improve Road Surfaces and Roadside appearance
- Improve parking facilities in the Village
- Better signage for Footpaths/Bridleways.
- Improved Bus Services

3.3 Housing

- New-build should be Family Homes
- No large new Developments
- In-fill Housing only
- Enhance The Hermitage as a local asset.
- Village is large enough, whilst still a village.
- Maintain and develop existing buildings

But

- Housing Needs Survey should indicate overall Housing requirements
- Protect the Green Spaces contradiction

3.4 Employment

- Need more facilities and serviced units for small businesses
- New shops/cafe
- Industrial Areas should be “cleaned up”

3.5 Conservation and Green Spaces

- Countryside feel should be maintained. Protect the Green Belt

Maintain verges and green spaces
Plant more trees. Possible Village Orchard/Community Garden

3.6 Community

Village Hall and Sports Pavilion/Sportsfield need upgrading
Requirement for more Allotments.
Village Hall and Pavilion should be more utilised
More community facilities (Shops, cafes...)
Encourage Pride in the village (Roadside clean-ups etc)
Additional Play Facilities

4. Next Steps

This feedback will be analysed by the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, who will examine the opinions of the public to consider which key issues the Neighbourhood Plan should focus on. This will help to define a vision, aims and objectives which will underpin the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Further public consultation will take place later in the process, to confirm that any plans conform to the views of the community as a whole.

Appendix A.1 – Introduction Display Board



Acomb Parish Council
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision, objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the Parish from 2016 to 2031

HELP TO PLAN ACOMB'S FUTURE



Acomb Parish Council is producing a Neighbourhood Plan and is seeking your views on what the plan should address.

Once approved, this document will have legal weight, and will be used by Northumberland County Council when considering future planning applications.

This is your chance to develop a positive vision and policy framework which will help to shape our future over the next 10-15 years.

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Appendix A.2.1 - Neighbourhood Planning Process 1



Acomb Parish Council
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision, objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the Parish from 2016 to 2031

TIMETABLE

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Oct 2015 | Formation of Steering Group |
| Nov 2015 | Approval of designated Neighbourhood Area |
| Dec 2015 | Neighbourhood Plan website went live |
| Feb/March 2016 | Developing Plan vision |
| Now | Listen to the views of local residents |
| May/June | Housing needs survey |
| Future events | Vision and objectives consultation Pre-submission Plan consultation Independent examination Referendum Adopted Plan |

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Appendix A.2.2 - Neighbourhood Planning Process 2



Acomb Parish Council NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision, objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the Parish from 2016 to 2031

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

This is only the start...

TIMETABLE

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Oct 2015 <i>Formation of Steering Group</i></p> <p>Nov 2015 <i>Approval of designated Neighbourhood Area</i></p> <p>Dec 2015 <i>Neighbourhood Plan website went live</i></p> <p>Feb/March 2016 <i>Developing Plan vision</i></p> <p>Now <i>Listen to the views of local residents</i></p> <p>May/June <i>Housing needs survey</i></p> <p>Future events <i>Vision and objectives consultation</i> <i>Pre-submission Plan consultation</i> <i>Independent examination</i> <i>Referendum</i> <i>Adopted Plan</i></p> | <p>Neighbourhood Planning gives local people the chance to make sure their voices are heard when plans are being prepared. We think the best way to make this happen is for you, your family, friends and neighbours to tell us about the land-use issues which matter in Acomb.</p> <p>This is the first opportunity for you to get involved in making a Neighbourhood Plan for Acomb. We will use what you tell us to guide how the plan is prepared and what it includes.</p> <p>What will we do with your comments? All the information you provide is important. We will consider how your comments, concerns and suggestions can be used to inform vision and objectives and policy areas for the Plan. This will help us draw a picture and tell a story of what people in the area most want to see happen.</p> <p>We will then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prepare and publish a report summarising your comments. This will be posted on our website www.acombneighbourhoodplan.co.uk and shared in the local media• Hold further local consultation events to share our thoughts and ideas on what you have said• Consult you on the proposed vision and objectives for the Acomb Neighbourhood Plan <p>How can you get involved? Acomb Parish Council has set up a steering group to oversee preparation of the Plan. We'd like to hear from anyone who would like to be directly involved.</p> <p>If you are interested, please contact the Steering group chair, Cllr Jane Wrigley on 01434 681487 or jane@longwrigley.freeserve.co.uk www.acombneighbourhoodplan.co.uk</p> |
|---|---|

Appendix A.3.1 – Thinking About Land-Use Issues



Appendix A.3.2 – Thinking About Land-Use Issues (Comments)

Good about Acomb

Near Hexham and amenities, but quiet with walks and green spaces.

Close to Hexham amenities but at the moment still rural.

A rough diamond in a lovely setting.

Size of the community surrounded by beautiful countryside. Conservation area at heart of village. Birdlife: trees shrubland encourage wide variety.

Lots of green space despite being close to A69 and Hexham.

It's good we've got Village Hall, Playing Fields, School.

Buses

Country Walks

Near to the Wall.

Walks into Hexham.

FRIENDLY.

Pubs, Fish and Chips, Amenities, Shop P.O.

River walk, park

History, Acomb Man

Not good about Acomb

The pedestrian route into Hexham is horrible, particularly when the route is flooded and after dark.


Signage for Industrial Estate is messy and unclear.

Village facilities not fit for purpose.

Industrial estate needs a good clean up and resurfacing.

Crumbling infrastructure: roads, water supply, drainage. Lack of funding?

Appendix A.4.1 – Your Vision



Acomb Parish Council
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision, objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the Parish from 2016 to 2031

YOUR VISION

This is what you said in the Parish Questionnaire

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| You value | <p><i>“Acomb is a village”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Rural environment</i><i>Good location</i><i>Attractive</i><i>Maintain peace and tranquillity of the countryside</i><i>Close to Hexham and amenities</i><i>A place to feel safe</i><i>Ideal place to bring up a family</i><i>Community</i> |
| You want to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>Maintain integrity of village</i><i>Manage flash flooding</i><i>Reduce traffic congestion</i><i>Improve road safety for cars and pedestrians</i><i>Safer roads and safer routes for young people</i> <i>Restore/improve village communal buildings</i><i>Improve facilities for young and old</i><i>Have a meeting place</i><i>Maintain the playing fields and other play areas</i><i>Encourage thriving small businesses</i><i>Provide more housing for the elderly</i><i>Assess housing need</i><i>Maintain Conservation Area</i> |

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Appendix A.4.2 – Your Vision (Comments)

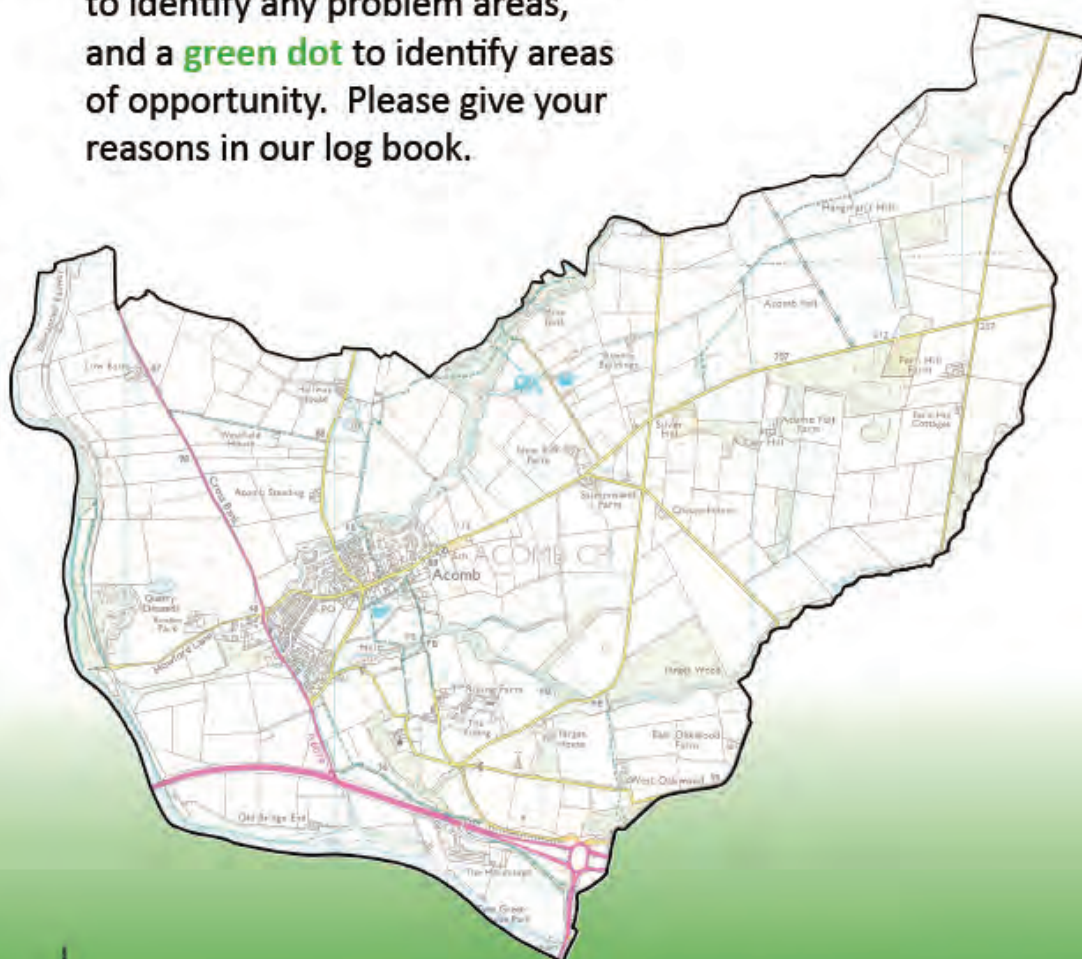
- 6 shops here 50 years ago
- Are we too close to Hexham?
- Update playing fields- football (used to be the place)
- Communal buildings need a revamp – Village Hall and Pavilion need updating
- Main Street – too many cars
- Need the Post Office – what happens when Paul retires?
- Retain village ethos – size, friendliness
- Village Hall underused – need someone in the village to run it/book it. Compare prices and organisation with others to see what's successful. Reading Room, what's on publicity, touring theatre, users' group, free use for new group.
- Pavilion underused. Could have toddlers', youth club, football.
- Small businesses- encouraged here (industrial estate ... small units, shared meeting rooms etc)
- Replace/more trees
- Orchard?
- Pond in bottom of playing fields?
- Drop-in tea at Village Hall to open out (not just the Monday Club) with bookswap/bookclub
- New builds should be aimed at families, as we're an ageing population
- Encourage people to care for the Village Hall, Garden House Drive (Garden House Bank) Pride in their environment, ownership.
- Village Hall used to have dances and shows on
- Edible Acomb! Not enough allotments – closed shop! Older people would like to share allotments and help each other.
- Post Office is an asset.
- Village Hall – not attractive, kitchen dire
- More open coffee mornings in the village
- Buses – cutting out 9am, which was always packed. Too big gaps.
- GONE more reliable
- Feel safe
- Get the different parts of the village integrated
- Protect the green spaces
- Christmas tree is wonderful idea (could we have brighter lights?)
- People don't know Acomb as they just see the low road, so it's under-appreciated

Appendix A.5.1 – Mapping the Issues



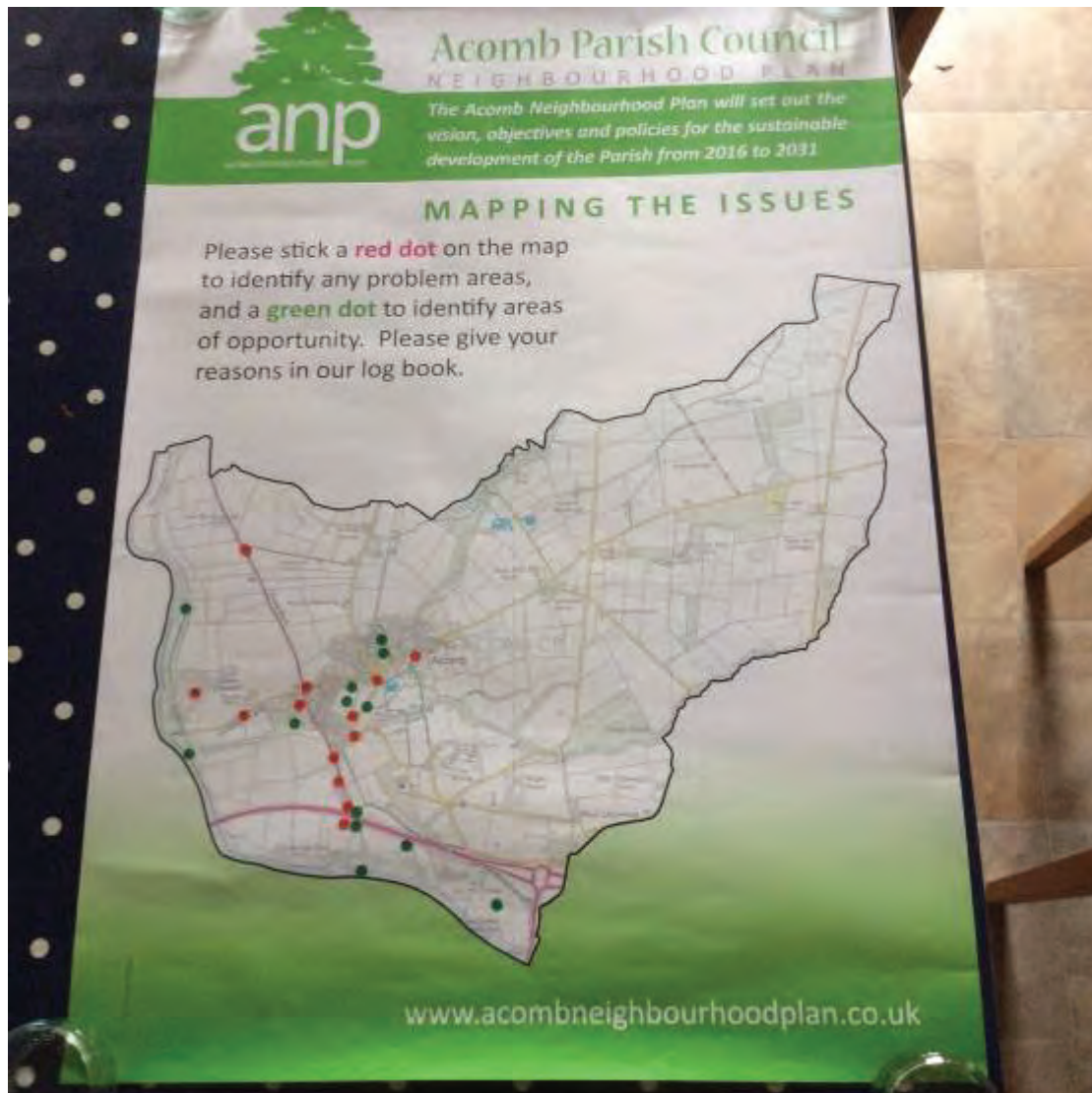
MAPPING THE ISSUES

Please stick a **red dot** on the map to identify any problem areas, and a **green dot** to identify areas of opportunity. Please give your reasons in our log book.



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Appendix A.5.2 - Mapping the Issues (Populated)



Appendix A.5.3 - Mapping the Issues (Negative Comments)

| No. | Site | Problem Area |
|-----|--|---|
| 1 | Garden House Bank near A6079 junction | Traffic pinch points – insufficient for traffic needs. Traffic too fast. |
| 2 | Top of Garden House Bank approaching Queen's Arms | Traffic pinch points – insufficient for traffic needs. Traffic too fast. |
| 3 | Industrial Estate | Eye sore – needs improved views |
| 4 | Howford Recycling | It's a mess – Eye sore. |
| 5 | Howford Lane | Very narrow – used by lorries – no passing point..needs bridle way next to road |
| 6 | Old Hexham Road | Not sign posted so people cycle on A69 and cars use bridle way - drain floods the road here |
| 7 | Pavement between Garden House Bank and A69 | Footpath too narrow. Traffic too fast. |
| 8 | Junction at Garden House Farm | Flooding Hotspot |
| 9 | Fields to left going up Garden House Bank where proposed planning is to be sited | Flooding hotspot |
| 10 | Main Street from the Pant eastwards to Acomb First School | Narrowness of road – provisional plans to make one pavement to widen road and make safer for pedestrians (children and parents) |
| 11 | A6079 – Acomb to Wall section | Footpaths from Acomb and Wall – all end on nasty road – no circular routes |
| 12 | Junction from A69 | A69 turn off is dangerous |

Appendix A.5.4 - Mapping the Issues (Positive Comments)

| No. | Site | Area of Opportunity |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Village Hall Playing Fields | Redevelopment opportunity – village hall, new sports facilities, car parking |
| 2 | The Gaps | Opportunity for new play facilities |
| 3 | The Hermitage | The Hermitage – enhance as a local asset building and surrounding area |
| 4 | Watersmeet | Needs upgrading to bridle way to connect with other bridle way |
| 5 | Pit Heap woods | Currently a footpath – needs upgrading (gateway) to bridle way/ cycleway |
| 6 | Old Hexham Road | Opportunity to signpost and prohibit traffic to make bridle way/cycle way/ footpath to Hexham |
| 7 | A69 junction with A6079 | Crossing is dangerous |
| 8 | Hermitage land | Could take footpath along to roadway at Hermitage |
| 9 | Playing Fields /Adjoining Land | Community Orchard to be planted here |
| 10 | Land behind Northumberland Court | Make these into allotments – tried to do it 30 years ago |
| 11 | Garden House Bank | Opportunity for footpath/bridle way to go down and avoid the traffic |
| 12 | River area north of Howford recycling | Opportunity to extend the bridle way along the river |
| 13 | Riverside at Hermitage | Possible footbridge across the Tyne Green (with sewerage pipe) |

Appendix A.6 – Key Themes



Acomb Parish Council

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will set out the vision, objectives and policies for the sustainable development of the Parish from 2016 to 2031

KEY THEMES

Acomb Neighbourhood Plan will be a land-use planning document looking at the management of changes to the built and natural environment of Acomb Parish.

The Plan could include issues such as:

- Natural Environment**
 - Small scale renewable energy schemes
 - Landscape and wildlife protection
- Transport**
 - Car parking
 - Roads, footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways
- Housing**
 - Numbers and location of new homes
 - Type of property - to rent or to buy
- Employment**
 - Location of shops and services
 - Availability of business premises
 - Facilities for visitors and tourists
- Conservation and green spaces**
 - Preserving our architectural heritage
 - Enhancing green and public spaces

You may want to raise other general land use issues.
What three changes would you make to Acomb? Please fill in a postcard and post it in the post box!



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Appendix A.7.1 - Feedback Card



What three changes would you make to Acomb?

1.

2.

3.

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Full name | <hr/> |
| Postcode | <hr/> |
| Email address | <hr/> |
| Phone number | <hr/> |

Please post in our post box after completion. Thank you!

Appendix A.7.2 - Feedback Card (Comments)

What three changes would you make to Acomb?

1. Protect Green Belt
 2. Improve A69 Junction (dangerous)
 3. Create footpath on N. side of river to link to Rotary Way.
-
1. Improve roads – appearance of 6079, Garden House Bank surface.
 2. Parking issues on Main Street, road safety for pedestrians and other users.
 3. Preservation of old woodland and green spaces.
-
1. Improve Industrial Estate. Small businesses need premises.
 2. Pavilion demolish and rebuild.
 3. Village Hall needs care and attention.
-
1. Improve facilities i.e. pavilion and village hall – make new – enhance playing fields.
 2. Plan for increased traffic.
 3. Ensure wind turbines etc renewable energy solutions do not spoil countryside.
-
1. Only build houses in infill spaces.
 2. Community shop/reading room/childcare
 3. Housing for families to bring new life to village.
-
1. Keep grass verges cut and well maintained.
 2. Resurface Garden House Bank but retain 2 way traffic
 3. Open coffee shop in village for meeting place.
-
1. Café for locals and tourists.
 2. Small scale business.
-
1. More allotments
 2. Community garden.
-
1. Introduction of workspaces for rent within village hall + Broadband.
 2. 6079 landscaping proposal will make big difference.
 3. Cycling sign to left to Old Road, by 6079/A69.