

Heriot Community Council
Initial Plan for Heriot Community
January 2019

Introduction

Heriot is a small community at the head of the Gala Water valley, either side of the A7 main road. The recently re-opened Borders Railway runs down the valley alongside the A7. The area designated as comprising Heriot Community Council is about 10 miles east to west and about 4 to 6 miles north to south. It reaches Soutra Aisle in the east and the B709 Innerleithen Rd in the west. The area is in the northernmost part of the Scottish Borders and extends to the county boundary with Midlothian. Attached is a map showing the Community Council area.

There is not a compact Heriot village. There are three distinct and separate main areas. These are;

Heriot Station. Alongside the A7 and the railway line. Compact area of houses of varying ages with several minor roads, pavements and street lighting. Access off the A7 was changed to a new road when the railway was rebuilt, and the old road now ends with a pedestrian only underpass.

Heriot School and Church. About 1 mile to the west along the B709. Strung out housing alongside the single road, no pavements and limited street lighting. There are also a number of houses around Borthwick Hall.

Nettlingflat. Accessed up a minor road to the east and north of Heriot Station. There is a compact group of houses that has expanded in numbers in a piecemeal way. Further along the minor road there is another group of houses at Brothershiels.

There are no longer any shops, pubs or post office in any of these places.

There are a number of other small groups of houses at various locations in the community, including The Dewar, Garvald, Carcant, Heriot Toun, Brothershiels, Stagebank, Gilston, Nether Brotherstone, and three at different parts of Crookston. There are also scattered individual houses, several in very remote locations.

1. Roads & Transport

The community's only public transport is the X95 bus service, which has halved in frequency with the installation of the Borders Railway. School pupils are transported

to the primary school and the secondary school in Galashiels on specially contracted buses. Despite being directly adjacent to the Borders Railway, and heavily impacted by it, the community has no direct access to the rail service – the nearest railway stations are at Stow (8 miles) and Gorebridge (6 miles).

The current X95 bus service now runs on an hourly basis and it is essential to Heriot that it is protected and encouraged.

Despite being responsible for the maintenance of the underpass that Heriot residents now have to use to cross the railway line to catch buses along the A7, SBC refuses to carry out any routine cleaning, de-icing or preventive salting. This situation is clearly unacceptable and a proper long-term solution needs to be found. Given that SBC has responsibility for the underpass, it is clear that SBC faces open ended liability in the event of any accidents occurring.

The future of the Heriot station area depends on proper maintenance of the Railway underpass

Being a diffuse community on higher ground, Heriot requires better provision of minor road gritting and snow clearance. Local farmers do their best to help local people, but at times it can be days before a gritting lorry appears. It should be borne in mind that Heriot is at the summit of the Borders Railway and the A7 between Galashiels and Edinburgh. There are snow gates at the northern part of the community both on the A7 and on the B709. The B6368 is notorious for being blocked in any serious snow storm on the section via Gilston to Soutra Hill and the A68.

Winter maintenance is currently inadequate in severe weather.

2. Local economy & tourism.

The local economy is dominated by agriculture (sheep, cattle and some cereal production) and there are substantial blocks of mature commercial forestry. The largest employer in Heriot is Raeshaw, a 9,000 acre mixed hill and low ground estate towards the west of the HCC area. It is unlikely that any of the farms will employ more staff within the timescales of the LDP.

Broadband provision. Heriot has a flourishing community broadband service that already serves all residents, without exception, who wish to receive high speed broadband. Heriot set up this service in 2012 onwards, and has raised all the finance necessary. The service is now part of a much bigger provider, Borders Online, which covers much of the northern Borders and also parts of Midlothian. With Universal

Service Obligation (USO) already being widely mooted, recognition of our broadband service is long overdue.

This service requires recognition from the appropriate bodies in SBC and indeed the Scottish Government.

There is a 3-turbine, 6.9 MW windfarm at Carcant, towards the west of the HCC area. There are two further wind farms on Heriot's boundary to the East. Toddleburn has 12 turbines rated at 48 MW, and Dun Law Phase 1 & 2 has a total of 61 turbines rated at 52 MW. Heriot is eligible for community benefits in varying degrees from the wind farms, apart from Dun Law Phase 1. Three further wind farms are at varying stages in the Planning process.

Following the closure of the village shop and post office, the community now relies on the mobile Post Office with limited banking facilities which visits the village for 1.5-2 hours, twice each week.

It is essential that this service is maintained.

Although it has two holiday let cottages, Heriot lacks any tourism attractions or businesses, but does see visitors admiring the Borders countryside, and walkers on the core path network. Cyclists regularly pass through the area, and the village lies on the 250 mile "Borderloop" and 79 mile "Borderloop4 Hawick" routes, as well as the route of the annual "Tour de Lauder" event.

Further efforts need to be made to ensure that Cycling routes to the Edinburgh conurbation area are developed.

3. Population

The adult population of Heriot is approximately 345, based on the published electoral register adjusted by local knowledge. In addition, the community includes approximately 27 children of primary school age, 14 of secondary school age and 10 pre-school children giving a total of 396 – rounded to 400.

At a rough estimate, the population includes 52 people aged over 65 (12.5%) suggesting that Heriot has slightly below the Scottish national average (19%). The Heriot population of ≤ 16-year olds is also approx. 50 (12.5%) again slightly below the Scottish national average (17%). These differences seem surprising but could be explained by inaccurate counts.

4. Education

A small primary school with a maximum capacity of around 55 pupils is situated in the village on the B709 about one mile from the A7. At present, the school roll has 27 pupils, across two mixed ability classes. The school is linked to Fountainhall School, with a single headmistress. Fountainhall school has a pre-school nursery that is open to children from Heriot. Secondary school education is normally provided at Galashiels academy, although a small proportion of residents opt for their children to attend private schools in Edinburgh.

Heriot school requires support to ensure it remains attractive to prospective parents. Pre and after school facilities are essential for working parents.

5. Housing.

The current SBC LDP has a single small area delineated for protection and no areas provided for housing allocation or longer-term development. This is repeated in the current MIR. Small scale development has been permitted from time to time in accordance with the provision of rural housing.

The largest developments have been of 6 houses at Heriot House (close to Heriot Station), 7 houses at Nettlingflat, 4 houses at Brothershiels, 4 houses at Hangingshaw & Stagebank. In total, there have been approximately 25 houses built in the area over the last 15 years. Three houses were demolished to accommodate the reinstatement of the Borders Railway. Overall, there has been a net increase in households of around 16%. There are no sheltered or other 'care' homes in the area.

There should be specific encouragement of such small-scale organic developments in future, in order to ensure Heriot remains a vibrant community with housing for young families so the school remains viable.

There are a number of potential sites within Heriot's boundaries. The community is very diffuse with housing widely scattered over an area of approximately 10 miles by 6 miles. Given such a large area it is not practical or indeed productive to attempt to suggest specific sites. Listed in Table 1 are the various locations around the community together with housing and numbers of people on the unedited electoral register. Maps are attached showing the same information visually and in more detail.

Area	Description	Houses	Population
EH37 5XT	Cowbraehill	3	7
EH38 5YA	Shostanes, Shoestanes Rd	14	30
EH38 5YB	Heriot House	8	16
EH38 5YD	Corsehope	7	8
EH38 5YE	Heriot Toun to Blackhope	41	83
EH38 5YF	Nettlingflat and Brothershiels	20	44
EH38 5YG	Falahill	15	36
EH38 5YN	Heriot Way	15	27
EH38 5YP	Shoestanes Terrace	8	14
EH38 5YR	Hangingshaw and Stagebank	9	21
EH38 5YS	Crookston and Gilston	27	58
	Total	167	344

Table 1. General locations of residents on the Electoral Register in Heriot

This table demonstrates the diffuse nature of the community as small scale with no large housing areas.

There is no scope for any large-scale housing development.

Consideration should be given for proposals which will blend in with current housing.

Therefore, the designs should be sympathetic to current buildings, density should be low and numbers in any one site should be no more than (for instance) 6 houses. It is noted that the MIR discusses these issues at Paras 5.13 and 5.14, where consideration is given to allowing lower densities, and indeed isolated houses in the countryside provided “the design and materials are of exceptional quality which will enhance or complement the local setting, respect the sense of place and be an appropriate size and mass.”

Heriot will actively encourage the building of “social” housing suitable for renting to young families and those on lower incomes. Exploration of such concepts is at a very early stage and further advice will be sought.

Heriot considers that its proposed plan fits within the suggested expansion of housing provision in the SBC MIR.

6. Community activity and Facilities

Macfie Hall, the village school and the church are the only public buildings. Heriot has a number of small local activities which usually have to take place in one of these buildings. These three buildings all need support and encouragement.

There is an active committee for Macfie Hall that is raising finance for a complete renovation of the structure, and there is currently an application before SBC Planners.

These efforts require sustained support to maintain an active and vibrant Community.

The small playpark at Heriot Station area is already protected in the current LDP. However, it also is badly in need of renovation and also proper drainage.

SBC assistance and advice are required for a successful renovation.

7. Heritage and Environment

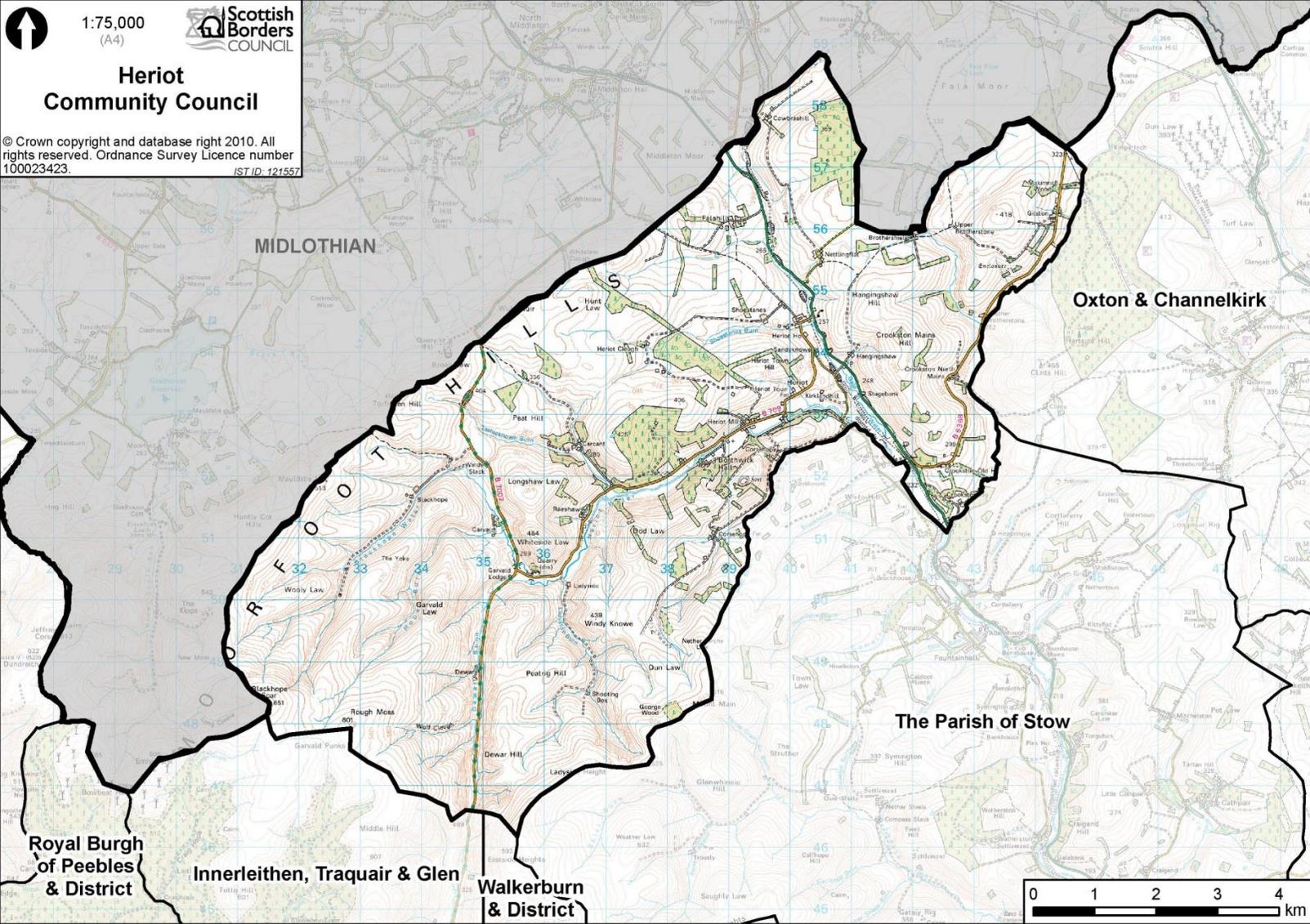
There are the remains of six ancient hill forts in the area, including the 128m wide Corsehope rings.

8. Public services.

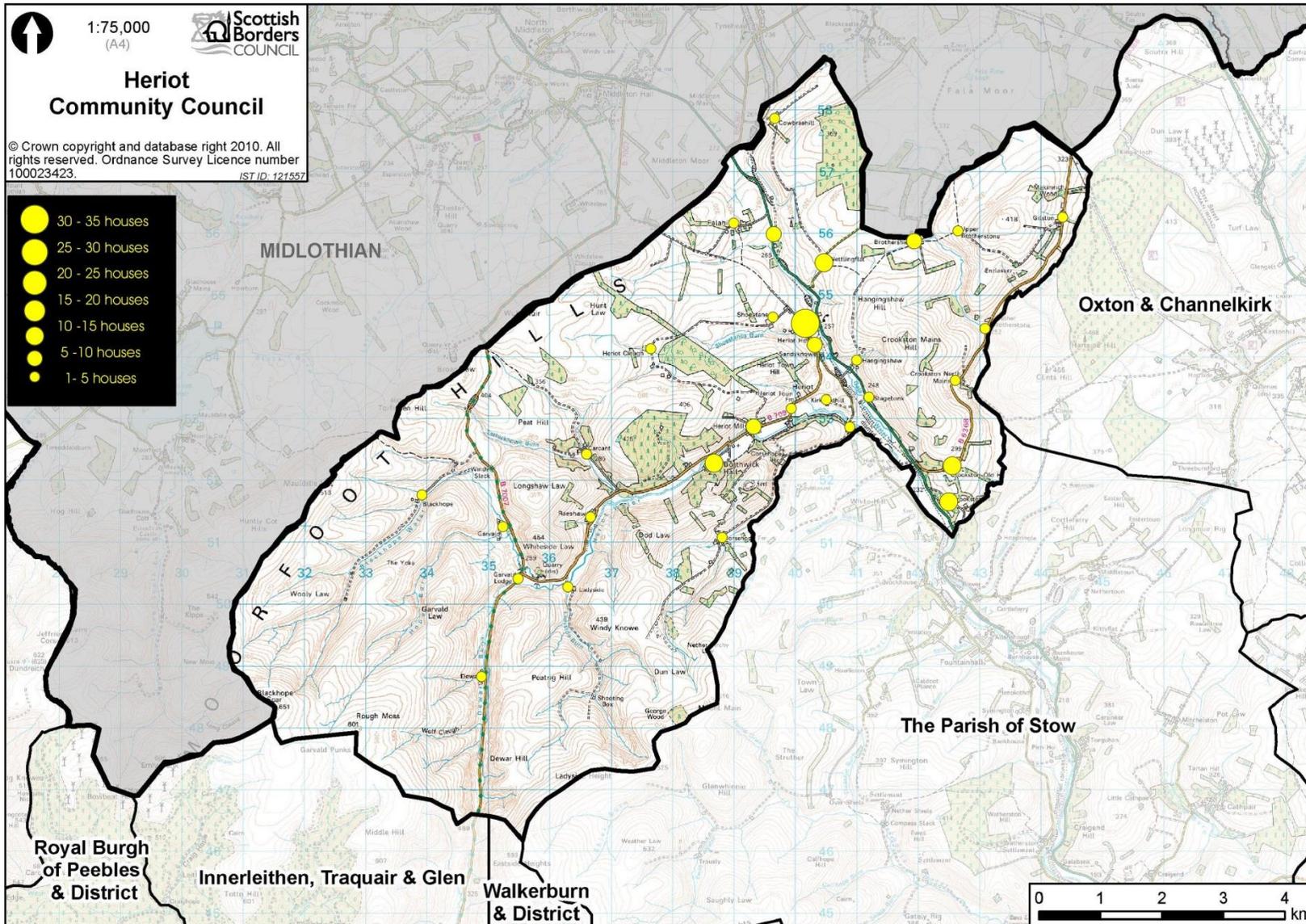
As a relatively remote location, Heriot has limited access to public services, beyond those that are essential for modern life. Residents currently have access to the following:

- a. Electricity: All properties have access to mains supply. The supply is occasionally vulnerable to bad weather, but is generally stable and reliable
- b. Water: Mains water is supplied to approximately one third of the community from a high pressure feed from Fala, via a storage tank to the north of the Macfie Hall. The majority of properties, however, remain dependent on spring supplies or boreholes.
- c. Waste water treatment: There is no mains drainage in the area and all waste water from the community is treated via a large number of separate septic tanks, most of which handle the waste from just a small number (typically fewer than 8) houses.
- d. Health care: No health care provision is available in the village. The closest GP services are found in Gorebridge (6 miles), Stow (8 miles), and Pathhead (7.5 miles). The closest accident and emergency services are Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (13 miles) and Borders General Hospital (19 miles)
- e. Emergency services: There are no emergency services in the community. The closest fire service is Dalkeith (11 miles), the closest ambulance centre is the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (13 miles) and the nearest police station is Gorebridge (8 miles).

Map of the Heriot Community Council area.



Indicative housing numbers and locations across the Heriot Community Council area.



Indicative population numbers and location across the Heriot Community Council area.

