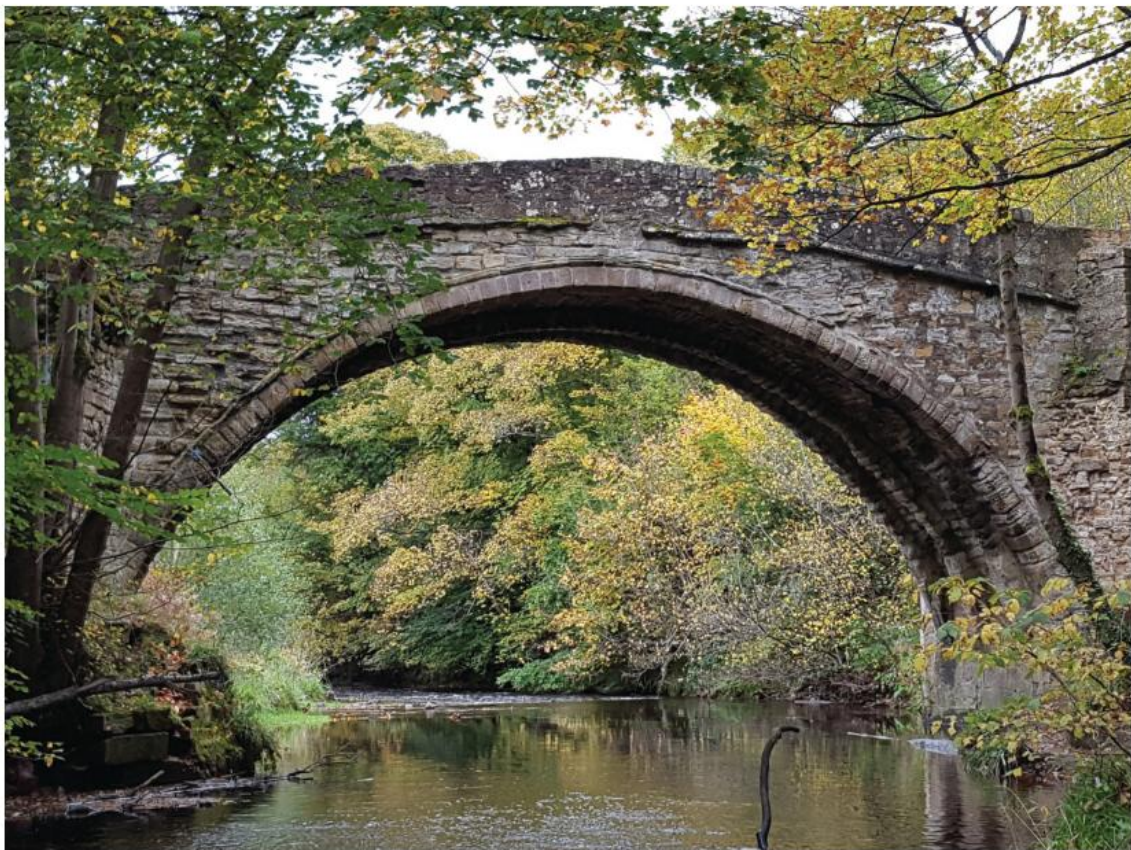


Local Place Plan

2024 - 2029

Eskbank & Newbattle Community
Midlothian



The Maiden Brig over the South Esk by Newbattle Abbey

Prepared by Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council



Foreword

Eskbank & Newbattle Community.

Community councils were introduced in 1975 under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The duty was placed on the newly established district councils to prepare an establishment scheme to divide their district into community council areas. In 1996 this duty passed to the present area councils.

Community councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They bridge the gap between local authorities and communities and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent.

There are 15 community councils in Midlothian:

- Bonnyrigg and District
- Dalkeith and District
- Damhead and District
- Danderhall and District
- Eskbank and Newbattle**
- Gorebridge
- Howgate
- Loanhead and District
- Mayfield and Easthouses
- Midlothian Federation of Community Councils
- Moorfoot
- Newtongrange
- Penicuik and District
- Rosewell and District
- Roslin and Bilston
- Tynewater

Midlothian Council has invited its Community Councils to prepare Local Place Plans.

Eskbank and Newbattle Community Council (ENCC) ward is comprised of a largely residential suburb of Dalkeith, the “County Town” of Midlothian, but has a different Community Council from Dalkeith (Dalkeith & District Community Council, DDCC). ENCC residents are heavily reliant on Dalkeith, the local municipal centre, for most services and amenities. If asked where they come from, then in a general context most residents would identify as being from Dalkeith rather than specifically Eskbank/Newbattle. This Local Place Plan for the ENCC ward will reflect its reliance on Dalkeith town.



Historically, **Eskbank** was a part of Dalkeith Burgh and within Dalkeith Parish. It grew largely in the second half of the 19th century as the location where Dalkeith’s business and professional classes opted to build their large stone villas set in generous garden grounds, which characterise the older part of the locality today and are protected by a Conservation Area.

Since the 1960s and especially the 1970s there has been extensive modern house building within Eskbank, especially (but not exclusively) on its western flank between Bonnyrigg Road and Lasswade Road. This process has continued to the present, consuming most of the former farmland and other green space here - which had been fragmented to some extent by road (and, recently, rail) developments.

The **Newbattle** component brings in part of the former geographically-large Newbattle Parish, from approximately south of Abbey Road extending to the boundary with Newtongrange and Easthouses, and including historic Newbattle Abbey and its grounds, merging into Lord Ancrum’s Wood and the Golf Course beyond (see the map on page 4), and the Newbattle Abbey Crescent housing development built in the 1970s. It integrates well geographically with Eskbank and is distinct from the communities beyond.

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Introduction

Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans are part of the Scottish Government's wider work on planning reform and implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. They offer the opportunity for a community-led, collaborative approach to creating great local places. The aim is to significantly enhance engagement in development planning, effectively empowering communities to play a proactive role in defining the future of their places. Local Place Plans are community-led plans setting out proposals for the development and use of land. Introduced by the 2019 Act, these plans will set out a community's aspirations for its future development. Once completed and then registered by the planning authority, they are to be taken into account in the preparation of the relevant local development plan.

A Local Place Plan must be prepared by a Community Body. A community council established in accordance with Part 4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 is a Community Body.

In early 2023, Midlothian Council issued an invitation to its 15 Community Councils (as community bodies) to prepare Local Place Plans. The intention is to enable communities to use a Local Place Plan to:

- set out its vision for the development of a single place, building or wider geographical area
- highlight issues that are specific to that area, and suggest ways they can be tackled
- influence the content of the next Midlothian Local Development Plan.

The Community Body must also:

- take account of the Midlothian Local Development Plan (LDP) and the National Planning Framework (NPF) and a locality plan (if that exists) for the area to which a proposed LPP relates
- set out their reasons, if any, for considering that the LDP should be amended - any changes suggested would need to be picked up on the production of the next LDP

- comply with requirements on the form and content of the Local Place Plan and the steps to be taken before preparing a plan.

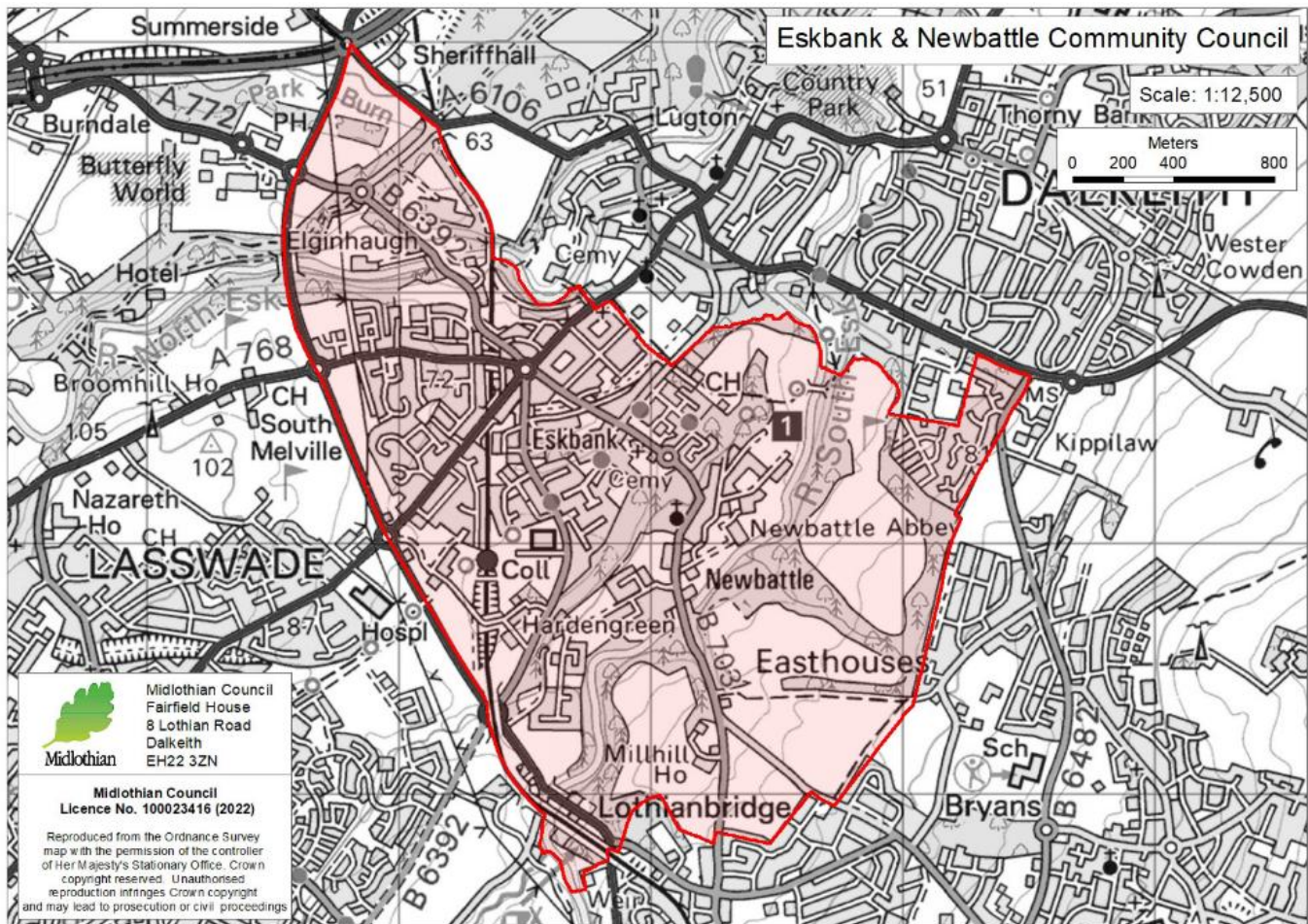
Midlothian Council is required to take into account Local Place Plans it receives and registers when preparing their new Local Development Plan for Midlothian (MLDP2). To allow this to happen, community bodies need to submit Local Place Plans to the Council by 31 October 2023. However, if the LPP is not ready by this date, they may forward a draft version which outlines the proposed content structure and submit a final version by 31 March 2024.

Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council received this invitation in March 2023. While it stated there that *"There is no obligation or requirement to prepare a Local Place Plan. This is simply an invitation to prepare a Local Place Plan."* we decided to proceed, using the advice offered by Midlothian Council Planning and other bodies. Accordingly, we set up a sub-committee to manage this and considered how to best consult the community.

The ENCC LPP Sub-Committee prepared a questionnaire based on the 14 themes in the Place Standard Tool plus a provision for adding any other comment and a request to state how they would describe Eskbank & Newbattle. That was published on our community council website (at <https://www.eskbanknewbattlecc.org/eskbank-and-newbattle-local-place-plan-a-survey/>) and residents were invited to download it, fill it in and return it to us. Invitations were sent out in June (1) via our mailing list, (2) posted on the independent Eskbank & Newbattle Forum on Facebook (widely followed) and (3) placed as a poster on our two notice boards strategically placed in the community. We did not have the resources to leaflet all the dwellings in our community.

The response by the end of July was disappointing. We undertook another round of publicity and achieved more returns by the beginning of September. However the total number received was only 28, representing approximately 0.6% of this community. We therefore thought any event would not be supported, and we decided to proceed using only an analysis of the returned responses.

Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council Ward boundary



The Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council Ward boundary shown in the map above is also the boundary for the Local Place Plan. That is, the LPP boundary is the entire Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council ward.

The boundary of ENCC Ward shown above dates from 2019 (proposed 2016) when the border between ENCC and Bonnyrigg & District (at that time, Bonnyrigg & Lasswade) Community Council wards was adjusted by mutual agreement to run along the A7, to the Sheriffhall Roundabout. In places it had previously followed the old border of Broomieknowe Golf Club so that land east of the recently re-routed A7 (Eskbank bypass), off Lasswade Road, and which now seemed a natural part of Eskbank, were still within Bonnyrigg CC's ward (and, for example, contained the HS2 and HS3 housing devel-

opment sites off Lasswade Road, which at the time of writing are approaching completion).

Until local government reform, Eskbank had been a part of Dalkeith parish and burgh. Now Dalkeith has a different distinct community council (Dalkeith & District CC). The Newbattle component of ENCC ward was within the geographically large parish of Newbattle which at one time included Woodburn, Newtongrange and Easthouses, while most of the land to the west (including Bonnyrigg) was in Lasswade parish.

Description of Eskbank & Newbattle

Population Statistics

Households and Population:

The figures supplied to us by Midlothian Council Planning in June 2023 for ENCC ward are as follows.

There are 2,100 households and a population of 4,800 in the Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council area.

The equivalent respective figures from the Eskbank & Newbattle Neighbourhood Plan (2014) are 2,434 households and 5,634 people.

Relevant data can be taken from Statistics.gov.scot, which can be viewed down to the “Data Zone” level. These are small geographical units which are each assigned a code. It is difficult to get an accurate figure for the ENCC ward population, and analyses of that population, because the small data-zones by which populations are analysed do not coincide well with the area covered by Eskbank & Newbattle (see below).

It seems probable that the figures used in the 2014 Neighbourhood Plan use a different set of zones from the 2023 figures supplied. Since the ENCC boundary has changed to incorporate areas by Lasswade Road where there has been recent housing development, and in general the population of

Midlothian has grown by around 16% in the last 10 years, it is highly unlikely that the population of ENCC ward has shrunk since 2014.

A sum of the six “Eskbank” zones (below) gives a total population of 4885, but that excludes the zone in Newbattle which covers many households in ENCC ward, but which also incorporates households in the new developments east of Bonnyrigg. Including that zone would give a large over-estimate of ENCC ward population.

Population data from statistics.gov.scot

Eskbank population (2021) = 4885

per sub-area

Eskbank 1 = 1,539

Eskbank 2 = 619

Eskbank 3 = 504

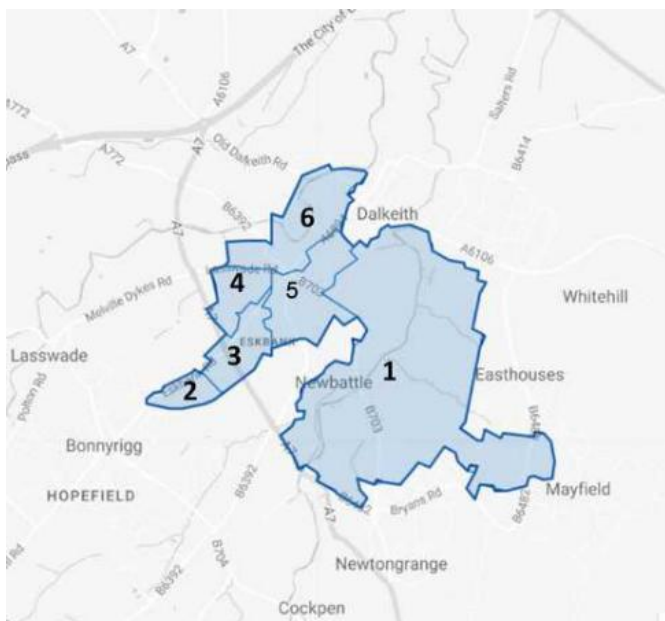
Eskbank 4 = 620

Eskbank 5 = 712

Eskbank 6 = 891

Scottish community councils date from 1975, when they were established by district council and islands council schemes created under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The same act had established a two-tier system of local government in Scotland consisting of regional and district councils which were created as unitary local authorities. The Local Government etc (Scotland) Act 1994 abolished regional and district councils and transferred responsibility for community council schemes to new unitary councils created by the same act. Midlothian’s Community Councils are described in the Foreword (page 1).

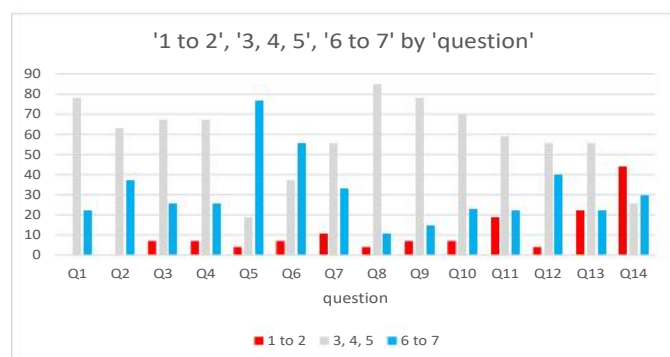
In Midlothian Council’s six electoral wards, Eskbank and Newbattle are within the Midlothian East constituency (Ward 5), with different Councillors from Dalkeith (Ward 3). The other wards are Penicuik (1), Bonnyrigg (2), Midlothian West (4) and Midlothian South (6).



Place Assessment: Statistics

The residents of ENCC ward were consulted using a questionnaire based on the 14 questions in the Place Standard Tool. The question themes were as shown below. As well as commenting, residents were asked to rate each from 7 (good) to 1 (poor).

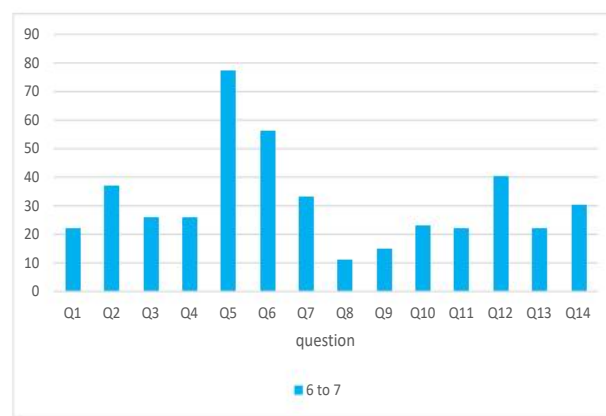
Question number	Question Theme	Mean Rating Score (out of 7)	Percent high (score 6,7)	Percent low (score 1,2)
Q1	Moving Around	4.7	22	0
Q2	Public Transport	5.1	37	0
Q3	Traffic & Parking	4.0	26	7
Q4	Streets & Spaces	4.4	26	7
Q5	Natural Space	5.9	77	4
Q6	Play & Recreation	5.6	56	7
Q7	Facilities & Services	4.8	33	11
Q8	Work & Local Economy	4.6	11	4
Q9	Housing & Community	4.3	15	7
Q10	Social Interaction	4.4	23	7
Q11	Identity & Belonging	4.1	22	19
Q12	Feeling Safe	5.1	40	4
Q13	Care & Maintenance	4.1	22	22
Q14	Influence & Sense of Control	3.1	30	44



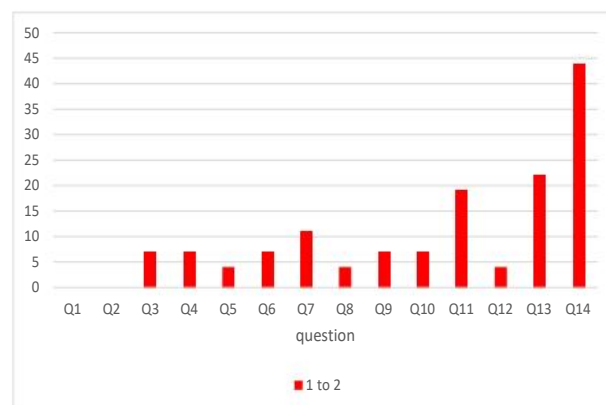
The theme which received the highest rating was “Natural Space”, followed by “Play & Recreation”, “Public Transport” and “Feeling Safe”, respectively in order of rating. This implies the community is relatively pleased with these aspects.

The theme which received the lowest rating by far was “Influence & Sense of Control”, followed by “Care & Maintenance” and “Identity & Belonging” (where positive responses and negative responses were similar). These imply action is needed in the near future.

Besides Q5, Q6 and Q14, the ratings were predominantly mediocre to fair, which implies room for improvement.



good rating (6 to 7)



poor rating (1 to 2)

Place Assessment: Commentary

Moving Around (Q1)

Nobody scored this as poor. 22% scored it as good. However, 78% thought there was room for improvement. A consistent comment is “OK if you have a car, but a long walk to the shops”. There are consistent complaints about the lack of cycle lanes (only Melville Road has these), especially between population centres and to Eskbank Station, and a lack of or too narrow pavements, especially on Newbattle Road approaching Newbattle Abbey Crescent and Newbattle Abbey, on the A7 near the Sun Inn and Lothianbridge, and at the A7 end of Dalhousie Road. These locations require pedestrian crossings, and there are complaints that Eskbank Toll and the Eskbank Road Roundabout (by Tesco’s), and the roads within the Hardengreen retail complex, could all benefit from pedestrian crossings.

Some options for paths should be considered. Re-opening of the path from Cemetery Road to Ironmills Park, closed due to landslip, gets frequent mention as being highly desirable. The walkway/cyclepath from Abbey Road to Newbattle Abbey (along the old WW2 military road) through St David’s Gardens avoids the inadequate pavements of Newbattle Road, and this could be better signposted. Additional access to that pathway via Newbattle Gardens could be considered.

There is a network of paths within the Melville Castle Estate woodlands (in neighbouring BDCC) which start within ENCC ward, such as from the Melville Castle driveway. It is less well known that they can also be accessed from Lasswade Road via Elginhaugh Gardens and Dandara’s Eskbank Gardens development, or from the A7 (next to the bridge over the North Esk). The high path along the south bank of the North Esk which runs along the wooded North Esk gorge is within ENCC ward. This path is now accessible and popular with the residents of the recent housing developments there. This path terminates at a set of wooden steps below Orchard View. It could be extended the short distance to Melville Road, by Elginhaugh Bridge, to complete a pathway loop through the Melville Castle estate.

The former Smeaton Line railway corridor which runs through old Eskbank was proposed as a footpath/cycleway from Kings Park to Eskbank Railway

Station in the Eskbank and Newbattle Neighbourhood Plan (2014) and set up as a project in 2018 by the One Dalkeith local development trust. However, following widespread local opposition during the assessment stage and the withdrawal of potential Sustrans support, this was abandoned. This corridor has become naturalised over many years, providing a habitat for wildlife, including protected species. The land consists of sequential parcels, in private ownership by different parties, some of which could potentially be developed piecemeal. Many in the community think it should all be preserved, as a unit, free of any development.

Public Transport (Q2)

Again, nobody scored this as poor and 37% scored it as good, leaving 63% scoring it as needing improvement. Many thought local bus services, including services to Dalkeith, Musselburgh and Penicuik, were good (Lothian 46, calling at the Royal Infirmary, and East Coast Buses 139 and 140/141), but services to central Edinburgh could be improved with some locations not near a bus service or served by an infrequent service and/or a dangerous walk, lacking a footpath or pedestrian road crossing, to a bus stop. Several regretted the withdrawal of the 49 bus service from Rosewell to Edinburgh which transited Bonnyrigg Road which now no longer has any direct service to Edinburgh.

Of the remaining services to central Edinburgh, Lothian 3 operates every 12 minutes and 29 every 30 minutes. Borders operates the X95 hourly. It is anticipated bus stops will be created for service 29 and X29 near Melville Dykes when that stretch of the A7 is urbanised, improving provision for properties by the western part of Lasswade Road which are currently poorly served.

Most praised the Waverley Line rail service from Eskbank, but some mentioned that trains should be more frequent and/or have more coaches. It was noted that the train service had suffered frequent cancellations over winter which had not always appeared to be weather related, making it less than reliable. Many said that better provision of bus, cycle and pedestrian access to Eskbank station was required. Many, especially commuters to Edinburgh, stated private car use is essential to them.

Traffic and Parking (Q3)

7% scored this as poor, 26% as good, with 67% responding that it is middling but could be improved (so a total of 74% indicated a need for improvement).

Most responses mentioned congestion at peak times both locally and on trunk roads used by residents. Many blamed the increase in population locally and across Midlothian, and remarked that a preponderance of the new residents may be commuters who choose to rely on their cars because public transport does not serve their commuting requirements well. There is also a surge in traffic at “school run” times. It should be noted that the schools which serve this community, both primary and secondary, are located in the neighbouring Dalkeith CC ward. Outside of peak times, traffic volume is viewed as acceptable.

There is a consistent problem with speeding traffic, especially on all roads feeding into Eskbank Toll. While visible enforcement such as radar manned by the police has some deterrent effect, it is usually short lived. Physical solutions may be needed in some places, such as road markings, vehicle-activated signage or speed humps/bumps, and safe cycle lanes and pedestrian road crossings are needed at some locations (see Q1).

Many residents have off-road parking with the exception of most of Bonnyrigg Road where many park on the roadsides. Bonnyrigg Road is also a busy route between Dalkeith and Tesco’s supermarket as well as from Dalkeith to the A7 and to southwest Midlothian. Many residents there are aware that cars are also parked there by local businesses and their employees and customers, and even by residents of adjoining streets. This has worsened considerably in recent years, for no apparent reason. It would make it difficult to establish cycle lanes there. Tesco’s supermarket and the local shop Eskbank Trading provide temporary parking for customers, as do the Justinlees Inn and Sun Inn, and some other local businesses may be located off main roads. Dalkeith is the municipal centre which serves this area, and it is usually not a problem to find free short-term parking there when required.

Streets and Spaces (Q4)

7% scored this as poor, 26% as good, with 67% responding that it is middling but could be improved (so a total of 74% indicated a need for improvement).

Streets in Eskbank/Newbattle are generally pleasant with a lot of mature private gardens containing trees, shrubs, and hedges. The old properties are largely individual stone-built villas of character, while there is a mixture of styles within the modern developments which have sprung up since the 1970s. These far outnumber any other recent buildings.

There are no community spaces in Eskbank/Newbattle where residents can gather. There are privately-owned estates such as Newbattle Abbey and nearby Melville Castle and Dalkeith Country Park which welcome visitors, and King’s Park and Ironmills Park are public parks which are adjacent to Eskbank/Newbattle, but there are no public squares or any built centre of any kind in this ward. There are five public playgrounds for young children, with areas of open green space, set within a number of established residential areas. Open ground in some new housing estates is managed by factors, not the local authority.

The streets are generally clean but do suffer from litter, some of which is discarded from vehicles and can be identified as having originated from the recently established fast food outlets at Hardengreen. A lot of this kind of litter is dropped on the route between those outlets (and also Tesco’s itself) and Edinburgh College’s Midlothian Campus, especially on the path from Tesco’s to the pedestrian bridge at Eskbank Station.

Many respondents have a positive view of Eskbank/Newbattle but go on to be highly critical of Dalkeith Town Centre, which is in a different community council area but is the municipal/commercial centre that Eskbank/Newbattle residents rely on and to some extent identify with. This may have lowered the rating score for this theme.



Newbattle Abbey College by the South Esk



In Lord Ancrum's Wood above the South Esk

Ease of access to Natural Space (Q5)

This received the highest positive rating in our consultation, with 77% scoring it as good to excellent and only 4% scoring it as poor.

Respondents generally agreed that natural space is an important and highly valued asset, and we are fortunate to have two highly appreciated such areas within ENCC ward, Newbattle Abbey and grounds by the South Esk with Lord Ancrum's Wood across the river, and Melville Castle estate by the North Esk (in BDCC ward but accessed from ENCC ward). Dalkeith Country Park is nearby in DDCC ward, where the North and South Esks meet. While these are privately-owned, Ironmills Park and King's Park are Council-owned public spaces (in DDCC ward). There are many more accessible natural spaces for walking and cycling close by across Midlothian, as well as much agricultural land.

Newbattle Abbey, Lord Ancrum's Wood and the fields and woodland beyond are within the New-

battle Strategic Greenspace and safeguarded in MLDP (2017) from development by that policy. This only permits development associated with agriculture within that greenspace. The component of the North Esk valley within ENCC ward, between the Glenesk Viaduct and the A7 bridge (each of which lie on the ward boundary), which enhance the amenity of the approach to Eskbank from the north, is safeguarded from development in MLDP (2017) policy as part of the North Esk Valley Special Landscape Area, as well as by other environmental and biodiversity policies. Given the amount of development nearby, many respondents expressed fears that development might encroach on these assets; it is therefore imperative that these policies are retained and robustly enforced.

The other concern expressed by many respondents was that of sewage discharge into the rivers by Scottish Water. Many think that this happens too frequently and is triggered too easily.



*The North Esk valley from Glenesk Viaduct
(looking up-river)*



*The North Esk valley from the A7 bridge
(looking down-river)*

Play and Recreation (Q6)

This received the second highest positive rating in our consultation, with 56% scoring it as good to excellent and only 7% scoring it as poor.

Many respondents state that there is good access to walking and cycling paths and networks. There is also good access to nearby leisure centres and school community centres which host sports/swimming facilities. However, these are not within ENCC ward although most are served by bus services. Newbattle Golf Club and Dalkeith Tennis Club, both located within ENCC ward, require membership. There are indoor and outdoor bowling clubs in Dalkeith. Commercial Judo, Dancing and Wargames businesses operate in Hardengreen Industrial Estate in Eskbank.

Council-owned open space in ENCC ward such as the playing fields by Kippielaw and around the former St David's High School off Abbey Road have all been consumed by housing development, and open green spaces around some housing developments are often maintained by factors who discourage their use as informal spontaneous play areas. Sports pitches in nearby King's Park are used by rugby and football clubs, but are no longer provided in Ironmills Park (which is no longer directly accessible from ENCC ward because of closure of the footpath to the bridge). There are no indoor soft play facilities. There are no facilities for older children, like skateparks for example, other than the sports facilities mentioned above which are not located in ENCC ward.

Various arts, crafts and hobby groups exist but are generally based in Dalkeith, where Dalkeith Library and Arts Centre and One Dalkeith Community Development Trust also host various activities which ENCC ward residents use. There is no community space in ENCC ward, but Edinburgh College and Newbattle Abbey college do make meeting rooms available to the public and Newbattle Abbey College hosts some interest groups, mostly with an environmental or biodiversity theme.



Children sledding on Newbattle Golf Course

Facilities and Services (Q7)

While 33% of respondents scored this as good, 56% scored it as adequate but needing improvement and 11% scored it as poor. Municipal, health, education, social services, church, banking, postal, exhibition and most retail services are based in Dalkeith town centre, where Eskbank/Newbattle residents access them. For food retail, Tesco's supermarket and much valued Eskbank Trading local store (who relinquished provision of a sub-post office recently, much regretted by the community) are in ENCC ward, so for some nearby residents a car is not necessary to access those, but transport is necessary to access the many other retail outlets in Dalkeith or in other nearby locations. Many complain about the deterioration of retail provision and lack of variety in Dalkeith centre.

Many complain that they are unable to register with the local (Dalkeith) GP practice.

There is no social space to act as a focal point in Eskbank/Newbattle, unlike most other Communities in Midlothian. There is one pub, the Justinlees Inn (which also serves food) which is a popular meeting place, and one restaurant, the Sun Inn, which serves food/coffee throughout the day. While the fast-food/drive-through outlets at Hardengreen were not welcomed by the community, Starbucks is becoming a meeting place, popular with mothers with pushchairs.

Work and Local Economy (Q8)

Few regarded this as good (11%) or poor (4%) and most were ambivalent (85% - the highest score in that category).

Most residents are dependent on our proximity to Edinburgh city for employment and training options. Many view Eskbank/Newbattle as predominantly a dormitory for those working in Edinburgh, or other locations in Midlothian and beyond, who have to rely on commuting and require good transport options. If they feel they must resort to car use, that leads to road congestion, especially at rush hours.

There is a scattering of small local businesses located relatively unobtrusively within a locality dominated by residential properties, with a small focus of establishments at Hardengreen Business Park.

Largely at the behest of National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014), plots at Sheriffhall South (within ENCC ward) in the Green Belt have been designated in MLDP (2017) for development for business use, and detailed or outline Planning has already been granted for developments there. It remains to be seen how many of those new employment opportunities are eventually taken up by local residents and how many by people who commute there from elsewhere, but it is unlikely to make any large impression on the numbers commuting into Edinburgh or beyond for work. Since it is close to Dobbie's Garden Centre employees there are much more likely to use the facilities around Dobbie's than those in Dalkeith or the few in Eskbank, so their retail needs may not contribute much to the local economy.

Eskbank Station is not well connected by public or private (taxi) transport or on foot to attractions such as Newbattle Abbey, Melville Castle or Dalkeith Country Park, or Dalkeith town centre (which is not that attractive), so it was felt by some that there is not much economic benefit from visitors arriving by train.

Many respondents state that there are many opportunities for voluntary work, mostly administered from Dalkeith.

Others state that broadband provision in some parts of Eskbank/Newbattle is of very low quality, impeding business development and working from home for which good speedy affordable connection is essential.

Housing and Community (Q9)

From some points of view the housing stock in the community seems a good mix of traditional older properties with character and individualism and modern more uniform properties. Most of the few previous socially-rented properties are now privately owned. There is no obvious deprivation or homelessness. However only 15% of respondents scored this as good, with 7% scoring it as poor and the majority, 78%, scoring it as adequate with room for improvement.

The most frequent comment was that the wrong kind of housing has been built for local needs. This is directed at more recent building which was seen as being aimed at the higher end of the market, predominated by 4-to-5-bedroom homes, attracting owners from outwith the area and wider Midlothian, often with their social focus elsewhere. They suggest that there should be more 1-to-3-bedroom homes built as starter homes or for independent older people who wish to downsize but remain in the area. These should not be flats, which can be socially isolating, and should preferably be in small developments within the community rather than in larger peripheral developments. There is generally insufficient "affordable" housing.

Many feel that the expansion of Eskbank and Newbattle has resulted in an influx of people with no connection to the area and who shop and socialise in Edinburgh, resulting in a loss of a sense of community. This is reflected in responses to other questions, especially that this is now a dormitory area for commuters and there is no focal point for the community. It is also thought that infrastructure has not kept up with population requirements such as in GP and dentist provision, and which contributes to congestion on roads through increased car use. However, it was noted that residents are welcoming, and, for example, nobody called for volunteer assistance during the Covid lockdowns because help was offered spontaneously where needed by neighbours caring for each other and to those seen to be in need of assistance. There is little or no disturbance or antisocial behaviour.

Social Interaction (Q10)

Most (70%) rated this as adequate but with room for improvement, with 23% rating it as good and 7% rating it as poor.

The positive comments stated that their needs were served, but mainly in the surrounding area rather than in Eskbank/Newbattle where there is no facility for communal activity. Some qualify that by stating that it helps if you can drive to venues. Others state that if there are opportunities, they are not aware of them through advertising. Many mention that some social interaction takes place in the Justinlees pub and the Sun Inn restaurant/coffee-shop. A few state that they do not need social interaction in the immediate area and value the tranquility.

The most frequent comment was that there is nowhere (other than over drinking or dining) for social activity to take place.

Identity and Belonging (Q11)

The views on this are mixed. In terms of rating, 22% scored it as good, 19% scored it as poor, and 51% scored it as intermediate. Many indicated that while Eskbank/Newbattle has a local identity as a pleasant place to live, and this can apply to neighbourhoods within Eskbank/Newbattle, they primarily identified as belonging to Dalkeith or wider Midlothian. Some said that any sense of identity was being eroded by it becoming predominantly a commuter dormitory, with an influx of new residents whose working and social life was focused elsewhere, mainly Edinburgh. Some who had settled in the area said they now felt they belong here; others said that having lived here for years, decades in some cases, they did not feel any sense of belonging. Some said that the lack of a community focus contributed to a lack of shared identity. This Community Council finds it difficult to attract and retain residents willing to actively engage in the community.

Feeling Safe (Q12)

This scored relatively high, with 40% rating it as good, 56% rating it as adequate, and only 4% rating it as poor. This is a low crime area, confirmed by police reports, but it is targeted sporadically by opportunistic burglars or car thieves since it is perceived as being relatively affluent. Community police assigned to the location consistently warn resi-

dents to maintain their security. Some residents are reassured by the presence of a police station in the locality, and some would like to see the police more visible on the streets. Others are aware that the police do engage with the community, and act to deal with antisocial behaviour if it is reported.

Some, especially unaccompanied women, say low lighting and virtually empty residential streets at night make them feel unsafe, and many say the passage from Eskbank Station to Hardengreen Lane/Tesco's car park is especially intimidating at night for anyone arriving by train, and that some reduction in bus services means an increased walk by other routes from bus stops to their homes, which some also find intimidating at night.

Many say that speeding traffic makes them feel unsafe as pedestrians or cyclists. Many complain that car "enthusiasts" with souped-up vehicles, often with loud exhausts, gather at the McDonald's in Tesco's car park in the evenings (to late into the night) and race each other around nearby roads, creating a hazard to drivers and a noise nuisance. The Police ask that this be reported to them so that they can justify resources to deal with it.

Care and Maintenance (Q13)

This was rated as good by 22%, but 22% also rated it as poor, with 56% rating it as adequate but could be improved.

The situation is best summed up in the comment that "the sense of the place being looked after by those who live here is clear, but it is not looked after in recent years by the local authority where it is their responsibility". Volunteers seem to have taken up maintenance of streetside flower beds and other municipal spaces, litter picking and weeding. Residents complain about potholes, uneven and worn pavements, lack of road marking renewal, lack of enforcement of littering infringements and lack of drain maintenance. Industrial units should supply litter bins outside their premises. Vegetation overgrowing walls and road signs and impeding pavements and pathways should be managed and residents advised of their responsibilities. This is especially important on walking routes to school.

Most attribute the perceived reduction in council activity to budget cuts.

Influence and Sense of Control (Q14)

This was the question which received the most negative response in the community survey, with 44% scoring it as poor, and 26% scoring it as adequate but needing improvement. However, 30% scored it as good. We presume this reflects the experiences of residents.

Those who have contacted their local councillors (Midlothian East ward) or their community council (us at ENCC) are generally satisfied with the responses. A quotation appears to sum this up: *“Until there was a recent issue I was extremely interested in I was unaware that the community council existed. It was good to see local councillors in attendance at the community council meetings as they can hear, first hand, the concerns of residents directly”*. The respondent goes on to say, *“I believe the Community Councils do the best they can, but need to promote what they do across all media formats to try to encourage locals to get involved”*.

Others are less impressed with responses on social media, but fail to understand that social media is not an official channel (ENCC takes no responsibility for anything appearing there - it has an informative website and expects formal contact through email or at meetings). ENCC will always try to follow up any issue raised by any resident. Obviously, respondents know about ENCC since we distributed the questionnaire, but many state that until they needed to raise a problem or seek information they were unaware of the existence, let alone the role, of community councils.

Some of the perceived lack of responsiveness may come from dealings with council officials. Some of this may come from not knowing the appropriate official or department to approach or, since this now mostly takes place online, how to make that approach. Many say that staff cuts have amalgamated management roles, and *“the reduction in the number of officials adds pressure on those that remain in post. It is very difficult to have face to face interaction with council officials”*. This is exacerbated by many apparently still working from home since the Covid pandemic, and not available for in-office consultation. The Council Officials need to improve their communication with the public.

Many feel that the community's views on planning and changes to services are ignored. This is often

directed at elected Councillors, for example when they go against Council policy at Planning Committee and act against the professional advice of their own Planning Department (and sometimes against the views of the Councillors representing the area concerned, which frustrates the electorate).

Scottish Water is widely criticised for being unresponsive to complaints and almost secretive about their activities and plans, and it is difficult to hold them to account. Some also criticise SEPA for not holding Scottish water to account, especially on sewage discharge into rivers.

Further Comments.

Residents were asked to add comment not covered in the preceding questions. These include:

- The bus service on the B6392 (Dalhousie Rd) is poor. A safe road crossing is required near its junction with the A7 (by the roundabout) to help with pedestrian access from Newbattle Abbey Crescent to Eskbank Station where the pavement on the east side runs out.
- Walls, trees and hedges are poorly maintained in places. Walls are crumbling and there is no planned programme of tree replacement.
- Cycle/walk ways need to be established or reinstated, and maintained.
- Potholes, especially those hazardous for cyclists, need more urgent repair.
- Sheriffhall is a nightmare for cyclists and pedestrians to negotiate from the Dalkeith to Edinburgh side and the changes there need to be progressed. The route to Edinburgh via Gilmerton needs to be maintained.
- Pedestrian crossings (and bus stops) are also required near Melville Dykes and en route to Dobbies, and on Newbattle Road near the Newbattle Abbey Crescent and Newbattle Abbey entrances.
- Most of the surrounding farmland has been developed changing the area from semi-rural to suburban over a relatively short period of years. The various small greenspaces that are left need to be protected, with presumption against development.

Description of Eskbank & Newbattle.

As a final optional question on our consultative questionnaire we asked respondents to describe Eskbank and Newbattle. There was a lot of similarity across the responses given, so we have produced the following summary of the residents' responses (with the help of AI) which seems a true reflection.

Eskbank and Newbattle is a suburban commuter township near Edinburgh, a suburb of Dalkeith but distinct from it, with a rich history and plenty of green spaces. It is known for its historical significance, including Newbattle Abbey dating back to the 13th century. The area has seen significant housing development but struggles with infrastructure and services to support the growing population. Despite this, it offers good access to Edinburgh and the countryside. Many residents appreciate the history and recreational opportunities, but some lament the loss of community spirit due to rapid development and lack of any community focal point. While it is a desirable place to live with beautiful surroundings, it lacks a strong sense of community and dedicated facilities. Overall, it is a peaceful, historic area with some challenges related to development and community cohesion.



The bridle path off Melville Castle drive, passing under the A7 bridge where graffiti artists practise



Evening by Newbattle Abbey

Summary of Place Assessment.

Cycle lanes are required to help commuting between centres, not just for recreation. Pedestrian crossings and pavement extensions are required at some locations. Some path extensions should be considered. Traffic speeding, congestion and parking all present problems at some locations.

There is abundant natural space in or adjacent to the area which is highly valued and is protected from development by MLDP policies. Residents feel that there is little space left where any large scale development could take place, and the presumption should be against developing remaining green spaces. Apart from these green spaces there are few play or recreation facilities within the ward, and no community space. Residents need to access these in neighbouring areas.

Creation of a social focal point within the ward would improve its sense of community and belonging. Since it is predominantly residential there are limited business and employment opportunities in the area. It has become to a large extent a commuter dormitory. In recent new building developments, there has been a preponderance of larger, up-market properties built which, while commercially attractive for the developers, do not reflect local needs for smaller (especially start-up or down-size) properties, and affordable family housing.

It is generally regarded as safe, but some improvement in access to Eskbank Station would make that less intimidating at night. Traffic speeding threatens pedestrians and cyclists. Many feel that while resident volunteers do a lot to take care of the place, Midlothian Council contribute less and less in areas of maintenance seen as their responsibility.

There is much frustration over a perceived lack of responsiveness to residents' concerns by the local authority departments/officials. Councillors and the Community Council are regarded as more responsive. It may be that residents need to be better guided on where and how to raise their concerns.

Assets, Opportunities, Needs and Challenges

Natural Space

Arising from Community consultation it appears that one of the most valued assets of the Eskbank & Newbattle community is its natural spaces. These green spaces must continue to be strongly protected against encroachment by development by policies within the MLDP.

The North Esk and South Esk river valleys, and the grounds of Dalkeith Estate and Newbattle Abbey, provide the core of the green network in this area. The **Newbattle Strategic Greenspace** is safeguarded through the Midlothian Local Development Plan, and is intended to prevent inappropriate development in an area that is essential for maintaining settlement separation between Dalkeith, Eskbank, Bonnyrigg, Easthouses and Newtongrange and for access to the countryside for residents in these communities.

The area covered by the Newbattle Strategic Greenspace is shown below (see also Appendix for a larger-scale map).

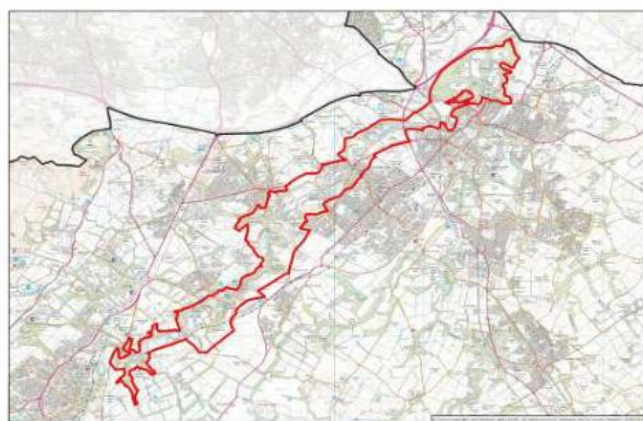


From MDLP Midlothian Green Network Supplementary Guidance (adopted 2018)

The North Esk river valley is defined as a Special Landscape Area (SLA) in the *MLDP 2017 Supplementary Guidance - Special Landscape Areas* and is shown in the map above.

Key reasons why this area is a SLA are:

- The densely wooded and often dramatically incised North Esk Valley which accommodates a number of designed landscapes and is of high nature conservation interest.



*North Esk Valley Special Landscape Area
(see also Appendix for a larger-scale map)*

- The rich cultural interest of this landscape and its popularity for recreation which is increased by its close proximity to urban areas.
- This narrow, steep-sided river valley is densely wooded and lined by the estates of several country houses and castles, interspersed with fields of pasture. Overall it is of high scenic, cultural, ecological and recreational interest, and is well-used by people in adjacent settlements.

The section of the North Esk Valley lying within the Eskbank & Newbattle Community ward is bounded by the A7 and its bridge over the North Esk on the west, and the railway line and Glenesk Viaduct on the east (then following the south bank of the river by Ironmills Park to the footbridge and (closed) pathway from Cemetery Road by the Water Tower. Access paths to the Melville Castle estate and its woodland walks start within it both north and south of the river. It may be less recognised than the Newbattle woodlands but it is becoming an increasingly important part of local access to countryside. The scenic impact either side of the B6392, Melville Road / Gilmerton Road at Elginhaugh is important to residents, and no development should be allowed here. The border of this SLA runs along Melville Gate Road. There has been concern among residents that the implied protection has not included the trees on the north side of tree-lined Melville Gate Road which border the planned development at Sheriffhall South east of Gilmerton Road, and should be retained to screen that development from Melville Gate Road and the B6392 within the North Esk valley. Any interference with those trees

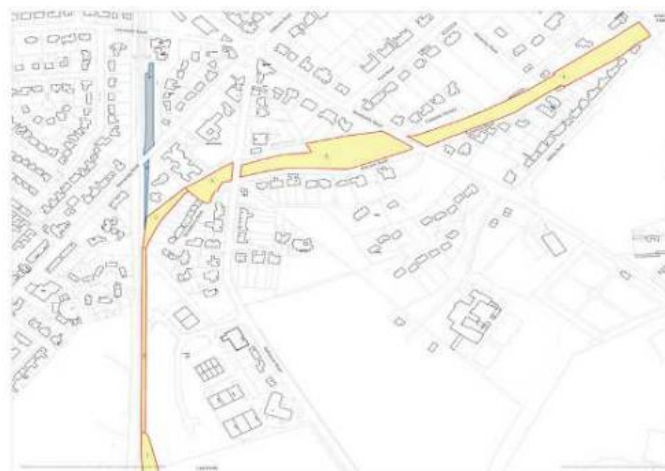
needs to be monitored, despite Midlothian's Planning Committee approving development plans for that site. Similarly, development plans for the other Sheriffhall South site west of Gilmerton Road need to be monitored for compliance with the conditions set by the MLDP for "economic" development on that greenbelt site to ensure those are sympathetic to the adjacent North Esk Valley SLA site and its scenic, biodiversity, and recreational importance. There does not appear to be any formal protection against future development to considerable green space around Hardengreen and off Dalhousie Road (B6392) as it approaches the A7 (see map below). This should urgently be considered.



The Smeaton (Colliery) railway cutting was closed in 1934 and has since been reclaimed by nature. It was sold off by the railway in the 1960s and is now privately owned by different individuals. None of these owners appear to be currently resident in the area or have property adjoining their holdings, nor do they maintain it.

The Eskbank & Newbattle Neighbourhood Plan (2014) produced by ENCC stated that one of the community planning priorities should be to "*Negotiate enhancement of the railway cutting to provide a walk and/or cycle route within Eskbank and Newbattle area*". In 2018 the One Dalkeith local development trust proposed that an off-road walkway/cyclepath along this route be established from the recently opened Eskbank Station to Kings Park and points in between. Strong local opposition and the withdrawal of potential Sustrans support resulted

in the plan being abandoned. The opposition was mainly based on its preservation as a wild natural space and wildlife habitat, but included safety fears and an element of invasion of privacy and/or loss of habitual access by those whose properties border it. Some still believe that such an off-road cyclepath / walkway would be a community asset, with the land managed and maintained as greenspace. It is recognised, however, that any such proposal brought forward in the future is likely to be similarly opposed



The Smeaton line cutting within Eskbank

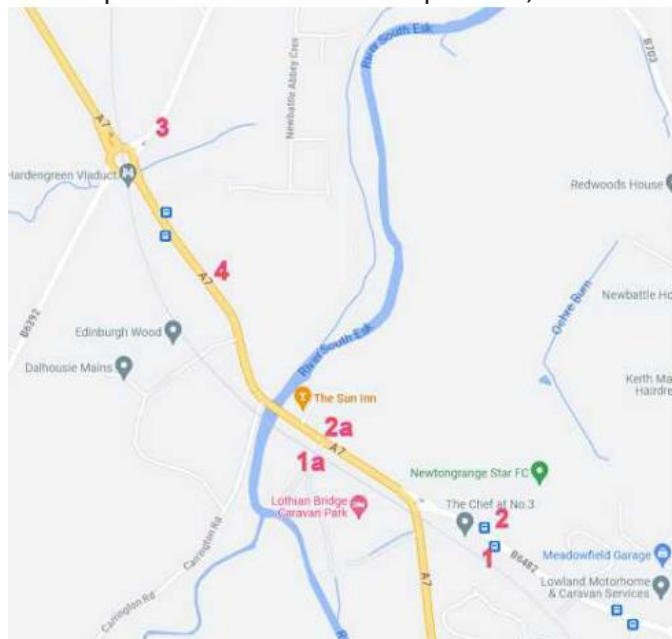
and difficult to fund. Whatever, both the advocates of a pathway and the advocates of it remaining as wild natural space can agree that no development should take place on it. Under its current ownership different owners have tried and may again seek to develop parts of it to their commercial advantage. Planning should consider whether it should provide policy for more formal protection of the whole corridor against future development.

Attention should be given to routes which cross over or under the recently re-established Waverley railway line, whose continuous fencing is now a biodiversity barrier. Those routes are important for maintaining biodiversity.

Moving around, public transport, and traffic and parking.

On moving around, and enhancement of access to public transport, there is urgent need for safe pedestrian crossings and provision of pavements to improve access to bus stops and Eskbank railway station.

On the A7 by the Sun Inn and Lothianbridge, the bus stops at 1 and 2 on the map below, which are



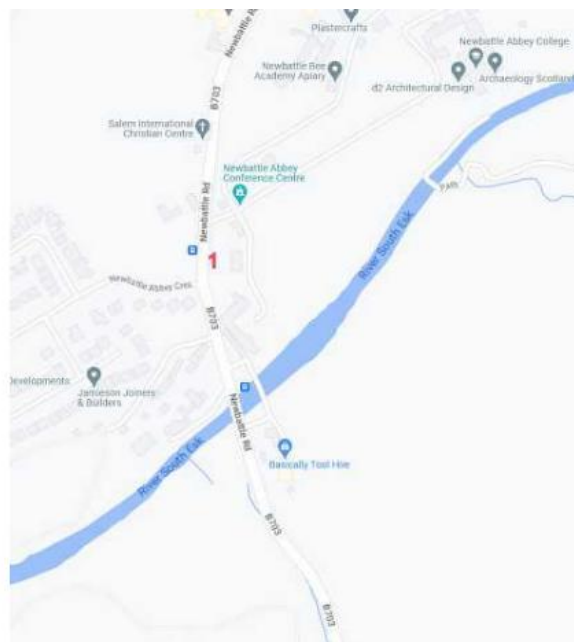
close to a second pair of bus stops on the B6482 Dalhousie Road fork off the A7, should be moved to positions 1a and 2a, and a pedestrian crossing provided there since traffic on the A7 can be heavy at times making it difficult to cross on foot.

There is no pavement on the east side of the A7 at 4 and the pavement on the west side stops after the bus stop, before Hardengreen Viaduct roundabout. A pavement and cycle lane should be provided at 4. There is pavement only on the west side of Dalhousie Road at 3, so a crossing should be provided.

This is an active travel route between Eskbank Station and Eskbank, to Newbattle Abbey Crescent, the Lothian Bridge and Sun Inn locality, and Newtongrange and beyond (e.g. Newbattle Community Campus), and deserves improvement as soon as possible.

There is a similar need for pavement improvement to the entrance points for Newbattle Abbey and

Newbattle Abbey Crescent from the north (Eskbank/Dalkeith direction) and for a safe pedestrian crossing at 1 on the map below. There is probably lit-



tle scope for pavement improvement on the part of Newbattle Road that is confined by old stone walls, and alternative access to Newbattle Abbey from Abbey Road via cycle/pedestrian paths through St David's gardens should be more prominent. The cycle path to Dalhousie Road and onward to Eskbank Station, and to the Dalkeith to Penicuik cycle route which now ends at Hardengreen, is also picked up at the junction of Abbey Road and Newbattle Road. Again this requires attention within the Active Travel policy for this area.

Because of its layout, parts of the ward are distant from one or other bus services. The #49 Lothian Buses service from Rosewell via Bonnyrigg to Edinburgh traversed Eskbank (via Bonnyrigg Road and Eskbank Road), and onwards via Dalkeith to Edinburgh. It was withdrawn without consultation in May 2023. Frequent services #3 and #29 skirt the area at different locations, at considerable walks for many residents to access. There will be stops for the #29 service on the A7 off Lasswade road, when that part of the A7 is urbanised. Is this sufficient for this community's growing commuting needs to Edinburgh? It should also be recognised that car access to and within Edinburgh is becoming increasingly restricted, and bus services need to cater for this.

There was general satisfaction with local and cross-county (Penicuik to Musselburgh) services although some thought some of the **local bus routes** could be improved. There should be a service from Dalkeith along Dalhousie Road to Eskbank station (and to Edinburgh College's Midlothian Campus there), and there is no local service along Newbattle Road or Lasswade Road where those would be welcomed by anyone with impaired walking ability. Some of the local bus loops could extend from Eskbank onwards to Lauder Road via Easthouses. It was noted that there is no bus from this part of Midlothian that goes to or near Midlothian's Hill End Ski Centre which requires a car for easy access. The new #46 service from Rosewell follows the previous #49 bus route as far as the Royal Infirmary, but from there goes to Fort Kinnaird then on to Musselburgh.

There is not a significant problem with **parking** where most residents and business premises have off-road parking, and/or parking restrictions keep roadsides free of parked vehicles. Bonnyrigg Road, one of the main thoroughfares, is an exception to this, where many residents do not have access to off-road parking, and the problem may be exacerbated by parking by non-residents and by businesses and their customers. It appears to have worsened considerably in recent years and the causes and solutions are not readily apparent and require investigation. Some bus stops on Bonnyrigg Road require marking to prevent vehicles being parked on them, and double yellow lines by side-road accesses need extending to improve visibility for those emerging from them. There has been no decision by Midlothian Council on whether or where to enforce a ban on pavement parking. It does not appear to be performed much in this case, so would probably not achieve any improvement here. Parking infringement monitoring does not seem evident here.

Bonnyrigg Road and the other roads converging on Eskbank Toll roundabout, especially Lasswade Road, Melville Road, Eskbank Road and Dalhousie Road, all suffer from intermittent **traffic speeding**, and enforcement of speed limits is not sufficient to deter this. Physical measures may be required. It remains to be seen what effect the general introduction of

a 20-mph speed limit will have on this, and whether the urbanisation of the A7 alters the numbers of drivers avoiding it by cutting through Melville Road and Dalhousie Road. Solutions need to be found for all road users, drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, to negotiate Eskbank Toll roundabout.

While the **train service** from Eskbank station is generally praised, some report it can be unreliable and prone to cancellation. There is no bus via Dalhousie Road to Eskbank station, and pedestrian access from Tesco's car park (the nearest bus stop) and Hardengreen Lane to the railway bridge (to the platform) is by a poorly lit narrow lane that many find intimidating at night. This should be improved.

A Sense of Place

Many of the community's views on identity and belonging; social interaction and a sense of community; and streets and spaces state that Eskbank and Newbattle has no social space which can act as a focus for the community. Any opportunity to create this should be explored.

Planning Policy Context

This LPP has been prepared with regard to National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (2023); the Midlothian Local Development Plan (MLDP) (2017); and the Single Midlothian Plan (2023–27).

Within NPF4 we find a particular accord with the principle on Local Living which states: “We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally”. We support the aims of the Central Scotland Green Network and the National Walking, Cycling and Wheeling Network, and believe this LPP accords with those objectives.

Regarding MLDP (2017), we take the view that with development of housing on sites Hs2 and Hs3 (off Lasswade Road) almost complete, and planning sought or granted for employment creation site e32 (Sheriffhall South) (see Midlothian Employment Land Audit 2023 section 6.8) there is little scope within the ENCC ward boundary for further development without impinging on the remaining green spaces which this community holds dear. The policies within the current MLDP (2017) protect named green spaces against development, and when the biodiversity and green space policies within NPF4 are introduced should increase general protection of green spaces in the new MLDP under preparation. Nevertheless, despite adequate policies guiding Planning decisions, there have been instances when Midlothian’s Planning Committee (composed of elected councillors) have overruled their Planners’ recommendations on planning decisions and on appeals of planning refusals, which have often gone against this community’s wishes. While we can hope that such incidences are rare, especially where they go against green space and biodiversity policies, there is nothing we can do when they occur.

Within the Single Midlothian Plan (2023–27) we are in general agreement with the overall aims and are particularly in accord with the aims of: “less house building and more affordable housing; more active travel (cycling and paths); and protection of green

spaces and more protection and planting of trees”. These are large, complex and multifaceted documents which we cannot review comprehensively here. Of these, we are most familiar with MLDP (2017) and its various subsequent policy implementations since, as a Community Council, we refer mainly to that for valid critique in performing our statutory role as consultees on planning applications within ENCC ward.

We expect that policies of MLDP (2017) which address our areas of concern will be carried forward in the subsequent MLDP that will replace it, and in many instances those will be strengthened to reflect objectives in NPF4, especially in the areas supporting local liveability and environmental and active travel aspects. We are not aware of proposals for the MLDP that conflict with our LPP proposals, so we do not request any modifications.

Local Place Plan Objectives: Vision Statement

The Local Place Plan for the area covered by ENCC ward can only deal with what is contained in our ward. Since the ward is essentially a residential suburb of Dalkeith, reliant on Dalkeith for municipal, civic, educational, health, and other facilities and services associated with an urban centre, we cannot take those into consideration in the LPP for ENCC ward. Although many comments on elements located in Dalkeith made their way into our community’s consultation responses, we must rely on our expectations and wishes for those elements, located outwith our ward boundary, to be met by the MLDP and its policies. We cannot specify them in this LPP which is for the ENCC ward area only, as shown on the map on page 4.

Focussing on the ENCC ward area, our vision for our community is to improve local liveability through:

- improved active travel capability in general
- improved public transport
- decreased traffic congestion, speeding and parking density
- greater emphasis on smaller housing units

- for downsizing or startup
- creation of a social focal point to enhance community cohesion
- protection and enhancement of the extensive green spaces and rivers valued by this community.

Local Place Plan Proposals / Action Plan

As a Community Council we rely on Midlothian Council to provide solutions to the proposals which are within their remit. We should be open to exploring other options for collaborative approaches between agencies to support other proposals, for example in the enhancement of green spaces and the environment. In the Planning context, we look for measures to support these proposals, and safeguards against developments which go against these proposals.

Active Travel

We have highlighted improvements to pavements and road crossings on the A7 and B703 (page 17 and larger scale versions of those maps in the Appendix) which we believe should be prioritised. Midlothian Council's Active Travel Policy has not yet been published, so we do not know whether those feature in it. We believe that the scheduled urbanisation of the A7 from the Gilmerton Road roundabout (near Dobbie's) to Danderhall, in phases over the next few years, will deliver improved pavements and cycle paths, hopefully meeting what we ask for. It will also reduce the speed limit and add bus stops (for the #29 service to Edinburgh) to a section of this community (including the new housing developments off Lasswade Road) badly served by public transport. This will be the responsibility of and delivered by Midlothian Council. We also must rely on Midlothian Council to try to find ways of delivering similar improvements on the B703 at and around Newbattle Abbey.

Since Midlothian Council appear responsible for adopting and maintaining most off-road paths, many of which traverse many CC wards so are not

the focus of only one CC, we again need to look to the appropriate Council service to organise and secure funding for that activity, and to negotiate with bodies (e.g. Sustrans) and/or take advantage of Government grants when they arise to exploit any relevant funding opportunity.

Many residents would welcome the re-opening of the popular path leading from Cemetery Road (by the Water Tower) down to the bridge which crosses the North Esk, giving off-road access to Ironmills Park. This path, which lies on our border with Dalkeith community, was closed to the public after a landslide on the bank of the river gorge that the path traverses caused earth movement on the path, and it was deemed hazardous for public use. Once the slippage has stabilised and the path can be made good at a reasonable cost (we at ENCC have received informal expert advice that this may be the case), the work should be carried out and the path reopened. Local volunteers have stated their willingness to carry out any related work for which they may be competent and that can be assigned to them.

Since an initiative for creation of an off-road cycleway/footpath from Dalkeith to Eskbank Station on the long-closed Smeaton Line railway cutting (page 16), was abandoned in the planning stages in 2019, that derelict but naturalised cutting should remain undeveloped.

Public Transport

We need Midlothian Council and others to negotiate with bus service providers to improve services from this area to Edinburgh, the main commuter destination. It has been shown recently that Midlothian has the highest new build completion rate in Scotland, which suggests many people are buying within commuting distance from Edinburgh rather than buying in Edinburgh. Bus commuting links to Edinburgh could be further strengthened. From the increase in road congestion and on-road parking on some local main roads, car ownership per household seems to have increased in recent years. With the imminent introduction of Low Emission Zones in Edinburgh city centre, and the restriction of cross-city traffic under discussion, it is likely to become increasingly difficult to drive into and within Edinburgh. Good bus services and bus route inter-

sections for interconnection choices may become essential to get to destinations in Edinburgh. It is evident that the Scottish Government and the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal, which promote Midlothian as a commuter destination, should intervene to help support transport policy to ensure adequate commuter choice rather than leave it up to struggling local authorities to deal with another consequence of this unprecedented surge in population here.

The rail service from Eskbank station to Edinburgh (and Galashiels) is good, and faster than by bus, but is occasionally subject to cancellations.

Traffic management

The persistent problem of speeding and growing problems of congestion and on-road parking need to be addressed. We need the police to maintain a much higher profile of speed checks to instil a perception that if you speed you are likely to be caught (as a community council we repeatedly ask for this). We would like physical measures to be introduced, such as flashing signs, road markings and/or speed bumps. We see them in nearby areas but they are not used in this area. We understand that solutions for improvement of Eskbank Toll roundabout for all road users, pedestrians and cyclists as well as motorists, are being sought by Midlothian Council. Some of the feeder roads to the Toll are being used as “rat runs” by motorists to avoid congestion on the A7, and their behaviour seems particularly bad, with, for example, poor behaviour towards the road crossing attendants (“Lollipop” attendants) who usher schoolchildren safely across the roads at Eskbank Toll. Measures to deter such behaviour, for example by making those roads unattractive as short-cuts, should be considered. It is likely that most roads in the area will have a 20 mph speed limit imposed soon. That will need to be strongly enforced to habituate drivers into observing it.

Road markings need to be maintained and bus-stop markings need to be restored, especially on Bonnyrigg Road. More extensive use of double-yellow-line parking restrictions should be considered, and should be extended at side-road junctions where visibility for those exiting junctions is being impaired by cars parked on main roads. It may be that banning parking on pavements could be enforced, but

where it would result in narrowing of some of the main thoroughfares with parking on both sides of a road to the extent that two-way traffic flow (and cycling) is impeded, double-yellow-line restrictions might need to be introduced. That said, pavement parking is not a noticeably extensive problem here. Traffic warden patrols are seldom seen in this area, and patrol frequency needs to increase to deter parking on double yellow lines and bus stops. Residents state that many local roads seem unsafe for cyclists because of current motorist behaviour and roadside parking, and solutions need to be sought collectively by the Council departments responsible for such matters.

Housing

We take the view that there is little further scope for any larger scale housing development within ENCC ward (without unwanted impingement on remaining green space). Where development has taken place, for example on sites off Lasswade Road, it has favoured large multi-bedroom properties. There may be opportunities for small-scale developments, for example when Highbank care home is closed when residents are moved to the new facility in Bonnyrigg, or on the vacant walled garden site off Avenue Road, where smaller two-bedroom properties could be built for those who wish to downsize from larger properties but remain in the area, and those looking for starter homes. We do not know how or if that could be achieved in a planning context, but it was often mentioned in comments in our consultation, and should be given active consideration by Midlothian Council’s planners.

Community cohesion

It was mentioned by many of our consultees that the area is becoming a commuter dormitory and losing the sense of community that it formerly had. Some would maintain that Eskbank was within Dalkeith burgh, and part of the wider Dalkeith community. However, they are now served by different community councils and in different Midlothian Council wards and are administratively distinct. There are no community sport or leisure facilities located in the Eskbank and Newbattle area, and no establishment (apart from those associated with drinking or dining) that is a focus for social activity, which could

encourage identification with the area. Instead, residents need to travel outwith this area to access such activities which, while it may encourage identification with Dalkeith and/or wider Midlothian, does nothing to encourage identification with the Eskbank and Newbattle location and community.

Many of our consultees commented that the lack of any local community focus contributed to a lack of any shared identity. To foster a sense of local identity, any opportunity should be investigated which could provide outdoor casual community space like a town square or village green and/or indoor meeting space like a village hall, possibly with a community café. We view this as aspirational and it is probable that many disparate elements would need to come together to achieve this. Nevertheless, if this is not stated as an ambition there is no prospect of anything ever being done to achieve it. Something needs to be provided which could anchor and develop Eskbank and Newbattle's sense of community identity. All elements of the community, residents, businesses and other establishments, together with those responsible for administration and governance, singly or collectively, need to examine the early stages of any initiative being planned to determine whether any opportunities to provide a community focal point exist. We believe this is very much in accord with NPF4's principle on Local Living.

Greenspace and Environment

This community highly values its local green spaces. Most prominent are the river valleys of the North and South Esk rivers, which comprise not only the trees which grow there and the surrounding grassland open spaces, but the rivers themselves. River valleys are protected under MLDP policies such as the Midlothian Green Network Supplementary Guidance (2018) and in particular the Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard and the North Esk Valley Special Landscape area (see maps in the Appendix), and those policies will be strengthened by NPF4 priorities. The smaller and/or urban green spaces may not be named in policies, but are protected under many aspects of MLDP policy and many have added protection from being in Conservation Areas such as Eskbank and Ironmills (appraised in

2022 and available on Midlothian Council's website) or Newbattle (no descriptive appraisal found online). All of these policies will be strengthened by the values placed on the environment in NPF4. However, is this sufficient? There are many in this community who are actively engaged, some professionally, in environmental/biodiversity issues who state that while we have green spaces they may not be healthy. We need to strive for better. Actions like:

- **protecting our natural spaces** by adopting a more nature sensitive pruning and cutting regime which maximises the benefits of our hedges, treelines and flowering meadows.
Set aside spaces or limit/rotate access to allow recovery of some of our most well used natural spaces.
- **restoring and enhancing our natural spaces** to improve our habitat quality and natural processes.
For example, by planting buffer strips along our waterways and parks, promoting hedgerows instead of fences in our school grounds and gardens and setting aside some of our park spaces for wildflower meadows.
Making sure that we are investing more in our wildflower meadows through better management practise.
Working with house builders to promote biodiversity in communal areas.
- **connecting habitats** and removing barriers to increase resilience and encourage and support species migration.
Promoting free flowing rivers by removing barriers.
Ensuring passage of species by supporting projects such as hedgehog highways and sympathetic placing of fencing.
- **supporting and promoting** community effort/participation in local nature recovery projects, such as supporting the no fly tipping pilot, hedgehog highways and multiple litter picking and gardening groups.

We need to push hard for support for nature protection, recovery and restoration. Restoring and securing our green spaces, supporting and encouraging biodiversity in times of climate change help make our local spaces more climate resilient. There is still

much to be done regarding active biodiversity enhancement of our green spaces, with many current green areas amounting to little more than swathes of manicured lawn, which in terms of biodiversity is poor (also local housing developers should add diversity to communal spaces which would also add enormous benefit). Integrating more wild areas as a mosaic, increasing corridors developing a meta-population of biodiverse areas would be beneficial for the whole footprint. It is also worth pointing out that while we have areas where public can enjoy green spaces they are well used and therefore come under threat because of this. A focus on preserving, expanding and enhancing our green spaces, ensuring they have investment, will make them more sustainable and available for future generations to enjoy.

When it comes to the rivers themselves, much policy affecting those is made and enforced by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA). Their quality can be greatly affected by Scottish Water, the statutory corporation that provides water and sewerage services across Scotland, whose activities with respect to river quality are licenced and monitored by SEPA. As a public utility, Scottish Water does not appear to be governed by normal planning considerations except in some circumstances. In recent local experience they seem not to have been aware of, or have ignored, such circumstances. They have proved difficult to communicate with on local issues and at times lacked transparency.

Both SEPA and Scottish Water as statutory bodies are consultees on many planning matters. We feel that in some circumstances their responses are too specific and the wider environmental picture needs to be taken into account by Planning, who should not just accept their approval without the wider context. It is not clear to us how issues in the remit of SEPA or Scottish Water that have certainly affected this community are governed by MLDP or NPF4.

With regards to the Lothian Esk, local plans are often not helpful in the preservation of river networks as they require a catchment scale approach and joined up thinking. While sections of the river would seem well buffered there are not enough sec-

tions which have adequate buffer to provide long term protection against encroaching development and the pressures from climate change across the catchment. We are lucky however to have some areas where topography provides natural protection from development and habitat erosion. As we have seen, fly tipping and sewage, mine water pollution and other new and emerging chemicals (of which there will be more discovered!) are continual issues and a threat highlighted by both statutory bodies and the local community, exacerbated by a lack of free flowing areas. Tributaries linking into the river network can be vehicles for feeding in pollution from external sources as can sections of the main stem above our footprint. Natural flood management which focusses on areas which may be outside of our footprint will also be important for areas within when it comes to flooding.

Without community support and engagement we wouldn't have the protection we currently have so this needs to continue and be encouraged. The effort that local people have been investing in the health of the river gives added sense of security to the wider community. Without continued support, encouragement, and acknowledgement, it will be hard to maintain in the long term. Community sup-



*Volunteers monitoring riverfly larvae on the Esk
(photo credit: Riverfly on the Esk)*

port through the enhancement of our community green and blue spaces is also helping to increase biodiversity and should be acknowledged, celebrated and supported. The anti fly tipping pilot is another venture which we hope continues.

Eskbank & Newbattle Community Local Place Plan 2024 - 2029

APPENDIX

This appendix contains large scale versions of the maps used in the main LPP presentation.

It also contains a statement on the evidence used to construct this LPP.

Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard

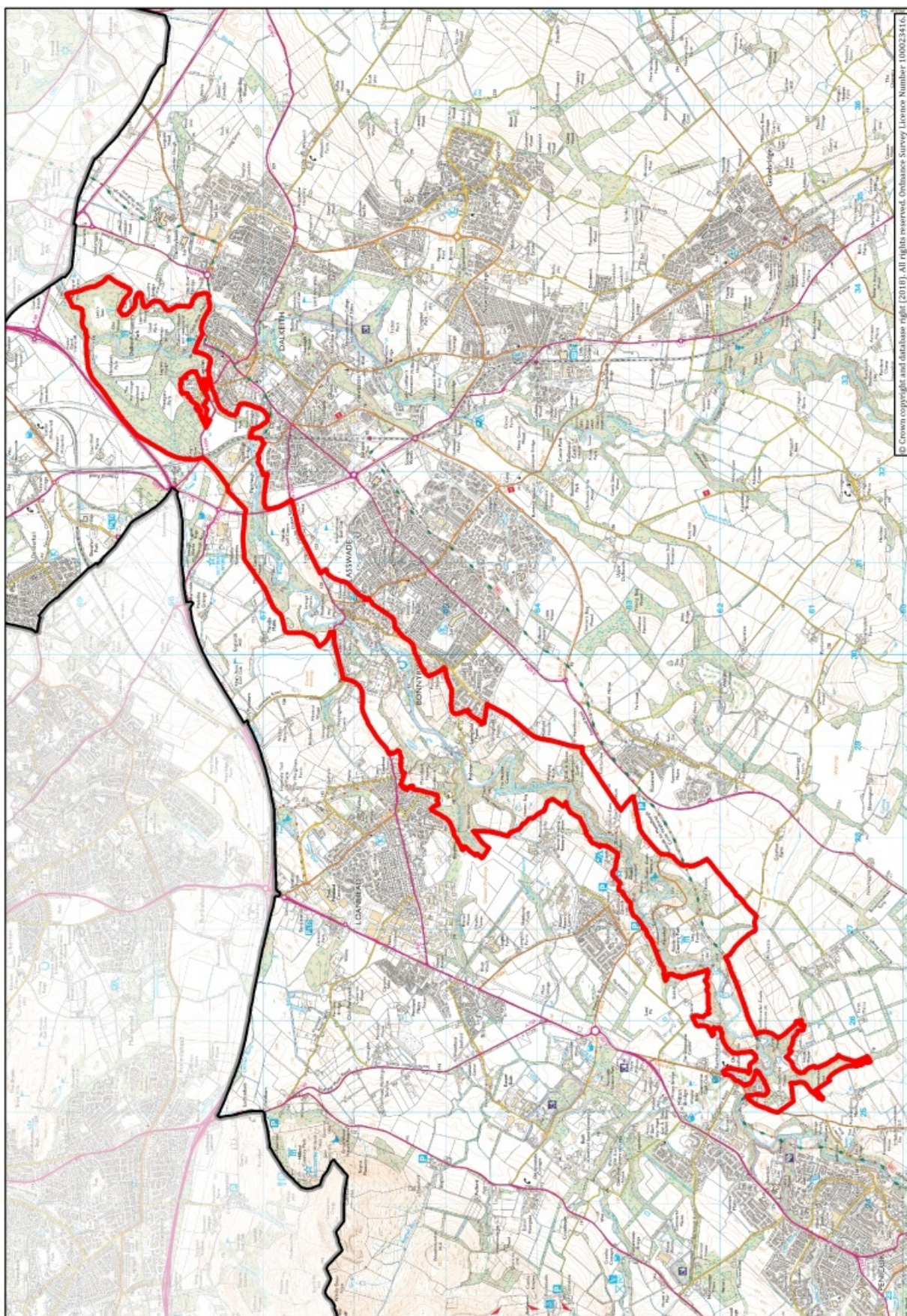
0 250 500 750 m

The map displays the Newbattle Strategic Greenspace Safeguard area, outlined in red. The area encompasses a mix of urban, semi-urban, and rural landscapes. Key features include:

- Urban Areas:** Dalkeith, Newbattle, Dalhousie, and Newtongrange.
- Green Spaces:** Benbucht Wood, Lord Ancrum's Wood, Talbot Park, Castle Park, Dalhousie Strip Wood, Anna Park, and various smaller woods and parks.
- Water Features:** River Esk, Newbattle Burn, and several weirs.
- Infrastructure:** Roads (A768, A704, etc.), bridges (Maiden Bridge, Lothian Bridge, Cockpen Bridge), and public transport (Eskbank Station, Dalhousie Station).
- Landmarks:** Newcastle Abbey College and remains of Abbey, Dalhousie Castle (Hotel), and various farms and estates.

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[illegible]



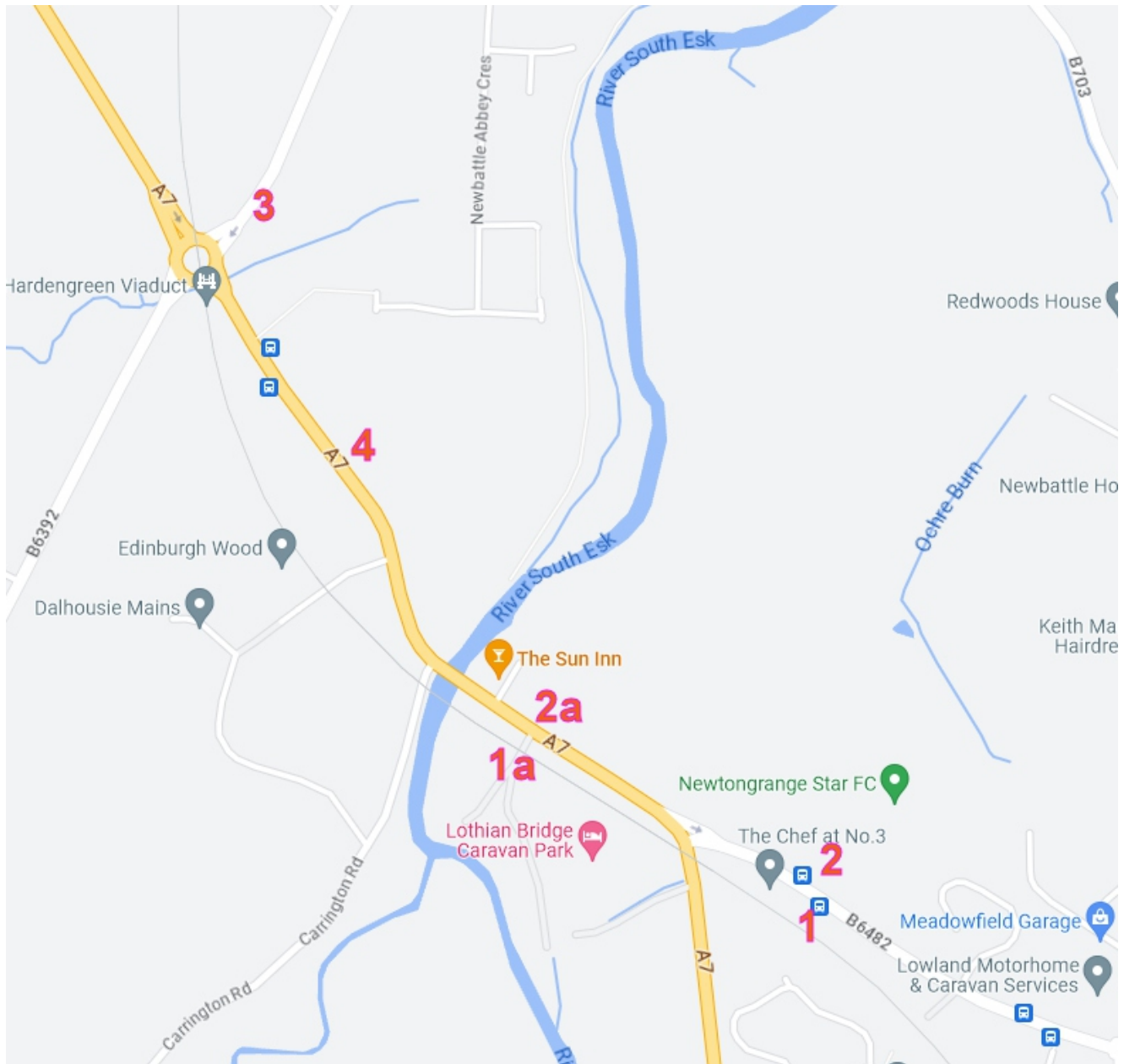
North Esk Valley Special Landscape Area



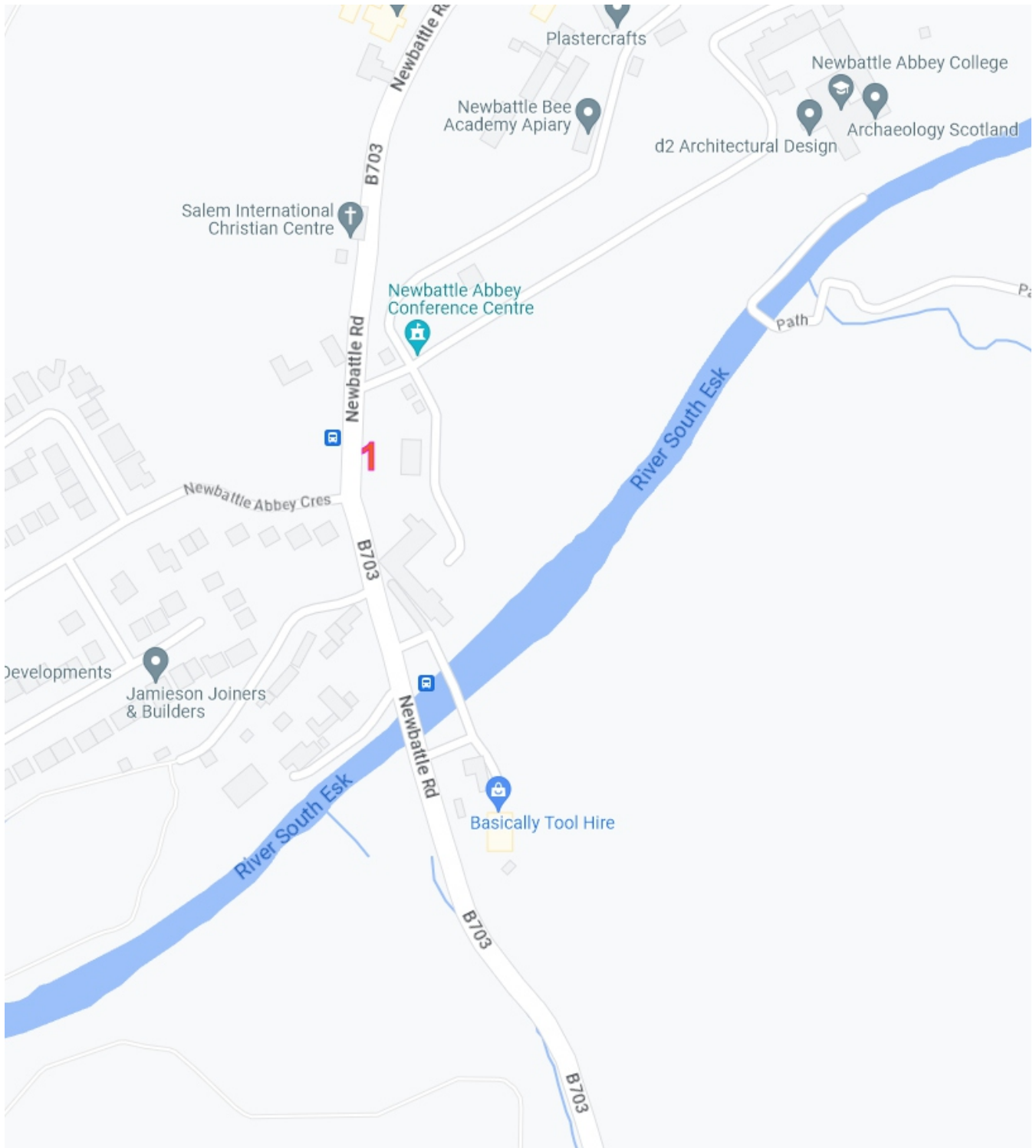
Hardengreen and Dalhousie Road area green space



The Smeaton Line railway cutting within Eskbank



Suggestions for A7 pedestrian crossing and bus stops in the Sun Inn and Lothianbridge vicinity



Suggestions for B703 Newbattle Road pedestrian crossing in the Newbattle Abbey vicinity

Evidential information

The community consultation process and results are described in the introduction section of this LPP on page 3.

The questionnaire used for the consultation can be found on ENCC's website at:

[https://eskbanknewbattlecc.org/documents/LPP Survey 1.docx](https://eskbanknewbattlecc.org/documents/LPP%20Survey%201.docx)

and the website post describing the survey is at:

<https://www.eskbanknewbattlecc.org/eskbank-and-newbattle-local-place-plan-a-survey/>

Our analysis of the responses is given on pages 7 - 14.

The questionnaire was advertised widely in the community - on our website; through independent local social media groups; by email through ENCC's mailing list (147 contacts); and on both of ENCC's public noticeboards in prominent positions. The consultation was open from June to September, and publicised at the beginning of June, and again at the end of July.

By September we had received only 28 completed questionnaires. We believe we reached a wide section of the community with the questionnaire, but since such a low number responded we cannot state that it is a true reflection of the community's views. However as the local community council we think that it closely matches the concerns and opinions brought to us by residents .

The matters raised in this plan were all drawn from the returned responses to our consultative questionnaire. Our collective

knowledge and experience as community councillors for ENCC ward has informed the presentation of this plan. In it we have focussed on what we see as matters relevant to the Planning process as it affects this community.

We anticipate that the new Midlothian Local Development Plan, interpreted under the policies of NPF4, will be adequate to address the matters raised here, in a Planning context. We do not find that the policies of MLDP 2017, which are what we have on which to base our assessment, need to be altered to accommodate the wishes of this community. We presume these will be carried forward into the new MLDP. We also anticipate policies reflecting NPF4 that are incorporated into the new MLDP will enhance the approach to issues which are of concern to this community.