



Proposed Housing Development off Selkirk Road, Moffat

Addendum to Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Ecological Assessment



A report by
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1. Introduction

This report is an addendum to the Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Ecological Assessment report produced in 2015 for proposals for a housing scheme north of Selkirk Road on the outskirts of Moffat. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the original ecological survey and assessment as it is now over three years old.

2. Methodology

To assess whether significant changes have occurred to the land surveyed in 2015 the site was revisited on 10th September 2018. The entire site was walked and any changes to the vegetation present compared to that recorded in 2015 were noted.

3. Site Conditions in 2018 compared to 2015

The site is essentially unchanged from 2015 except that it appears that agricultural management has been less intense than it was three years ago. The majority of the fields had been cut for silage within the past few weeks, however it was clear that they remained species-poor, but appear to have an increased abundance of coarse grasses than was present in 2015. The field mapped as semi-improved (SI) in 2015 due to the abundance of yellow rattle had no evidence of this species in 2018 and appeared to be very similar to the other fields cut for silage, perhaps with a greater abundance of common sorrel *Rumex acetosa* than the other fields (it had also been cut for silage). The northernmost field (south of the Auldton Mott) was grazed by sheep at the time of visiting and remained improved grassland. The grassland on Auldton Mott itself remains unchanged in species composition and there are still a number of trees and gorse bushes present. The young plantation remains unchanged, as does the area of marshy grassland on the western edge of the southern part of the site.

The badger sett on Auldton Mott is still present and active and evidence of badger foraging was present in the field mapped as semi-improved in 2015.

The only significant change present within the site is the presence of a long strip of creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* along the western edge of the south-western field which was not present in 2015.

4. Assessment of Ecological Importance

There are no reasons to change the assessment of the ecological importance of the features present within the site from that made in 2015. The areas of semi-natural vegetation present are of no more than local ecological importance, with the exception of the grassland on Auldton Mott, which is of community/parish ecological importance. The badger sett is also of community/parish ecological significance. Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

5. Assessment of Impacts

The predicted impacts from the proposal remain unchanged and the mitigation proposed in the 2015 report is still appropriate. For clarity these sections of the 2015 report are quoted below in full

along with Figure 4 from that report showing the mitigation required to reduce adverse impacts on badgers:

“ 5. Assessment of Development Proposal Predicted Impacts

The proposals will result in the loss of the majority of the improved and semi-improved grassland on the site. Whilst this is of limited botanical interest it is of importance as feeding habitat for the badgers from Auldton Mott. Whilst the mott badgers will also feed in other fields on the east side of Moffat, it is likely that the fields within the development constitute a significant proportion of their feeding area given the proximity to the sett. During the site survey there was ample evidence of badgers feeding in areas of grassland with pignut on the edges of the fields, but it is also likely that they use the main parts of the fields too. Evidence of badger foraging was also seen in the young plantations to the south-east of the mott. The impact upon the badgers using the mott sett from the proposed development is predicted to be adverse and long-term at the community/parish scale due to the loss of feeding habitat. The sett itself will not be impacted by the proposed development as its position on a scheduled ancient monument means that any construction will be restricted to well beyond the 30m excavation buffer required for a badger sett.

Bats are recorded as roosting in houses in Moffat and are likely to feed around the trees on the Mott and along the edges of the young plantations, the line of trees and shrubs on the western edge of the site. None of these trees will be affected by the proposals, so there should be no adverse impact on foraging bats, indeed there may be an increase in foraging habitat in the medium term due to the creation of gardens with their associated trees and shrubs. Pipistrelle bats are known to forage around street lights so should not be adversely affected by additional street lights due to the development. Daubenton's bats, which avoid street lights, are only recorded from the west side of Moffat and are likely to concentrate feeding along the River Annan and are not likely to be affected by additional street lighting at the proposed development.

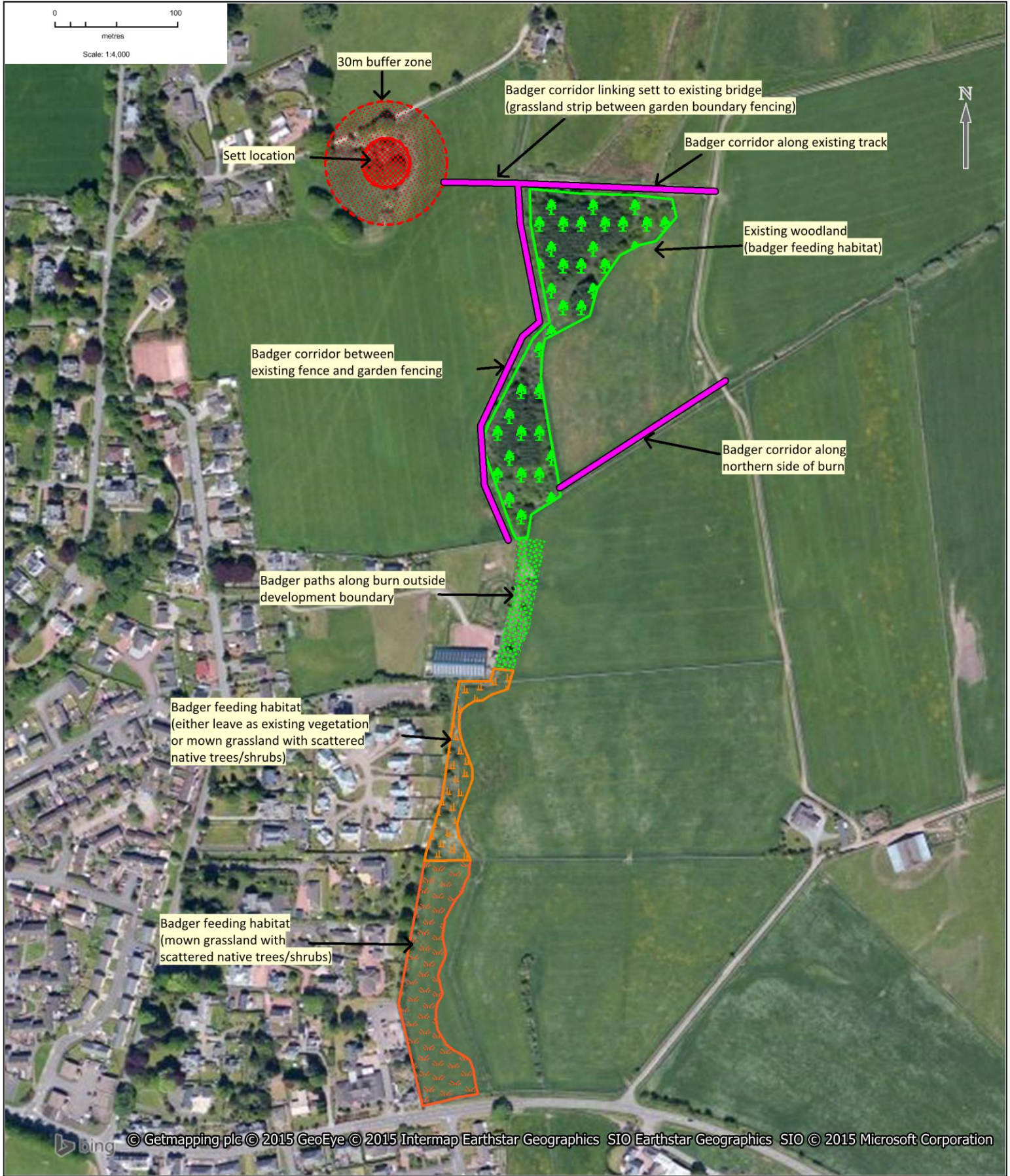
6. Mitigation

To mitigate the impact upon badger it is proposed to have corridors through the proposed housing development which will provide routes for badgers through the development to feeding areas to the east of the development and to areas to the west of Crosslaw Burn which will be retained as badger feeding habitat (Figure 4).

7. Residual Impact and Conclusions

The impact upon bats is likely to be positive at the local scale in the medium and long term due to the creation of gardens which will provide additional foraging habitat for bats.

The impact upon badger is likely to be adverse at the local scale for the long term once the mitigation proposals are taken in to account. Whilst the mitigation measures will allow badgers access to feeding areas beyond the proposed development they do not alleviate the loss of a large area of grassland which currently provides foraging habitat.”



**Figure 4: Proposed Housing Development off Selkirk Road, Moffat
Indicative badger mitigation proposals**

6. Photographs



Photo 1 Looking north across site from Selkirk Road



Photo 2 Looking north along edge of Crosslaw Burn from centre of site



Photo 3 Looking south across southern part of site towards Selkirk Road



Photo 4 Auldton Mott from the east



Photo 5 Looking south towards the plantation from Auldton Mott

7. Badger Legislation

Both badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

Offences under the Act include:

- wilfully taking, injuring or killing a badger
- cruelty to a badger
- intentional or reckless interference with a badger sett
- sale or possession of a badger
- marking or ringing of a badger

Interfering with a badger sett includes:

- damaging or destroying a sett or any part of it
- obstructing access to a sett
- disturbing a badger while it is in a sett
- causing or allowing a dog to enter a badger sett

The 1992 Act defines a badger sett as “any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger”.