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NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

APRIL 2001

A43 TOWCESTER TO M40 DUALLING PROJECT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION

WITHIN CPO BOUNDARY

INTERIM REPORT ON RESULTS

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MITIGATION WITHIN CPO BOUNDARY

INTERIM REPORT ON RESULTS

Date: 4th April 2001

Introduction

Archaeological investigations within the CPO boundary have targeted a number of sites, suspected sites and historic boundaries. The scope of work has been in response to briefs for archaeological mitigation issued by Northamptonshire Heritage. These have determined the location, extent and intensity of archaeological investigations along the route (in the Northamptonshire section).

Further to the archaeological works specifically itemised in the briefs, there is a requirement for undertaking an archaeological Watching Brief (classified as a 'Level 1' archaeological response) with provision for the recording of any archaeological remains which may come to light in the course of construction groundworks (*A43 Road Improvement Scheme: Silverstone and Brackley Hatch Sections. Brief for Archaeological Recording Action* [Northamptonshire Heritage, 26 May 2000]).

The following table summarises the work to date. It includes four area excavations of sites of Iron Age and Roman date, one excavation of part of a Roman road, and two trenches investigating potential historic boundaries. Three more trenches to be excavated are targeted on historic boundaries. Site locations are shown in Figs. 2-5.

Site Ref.	Mitigation requirements			Results
	Geophysical	Evaluation	Excavation	
SL3	yes	8 trenches	4500 sq m	IA settlement extends W of CPO boundary
SL2	yes	4 trenches	5000 sq m	IA settlement extends W of CPO boundary
SL1	yes	2 trenches	200 sq m	trace of Roman road running N-S
Bandbrook Bridge	yes	-	-	nothing found (not illustrated)
SL4	yes	4 trenches	-	nothing found
Whittlesbury Lane (WBR)	-	-	yes	single trench to be done
Winterhills Road 1 (WHR 1)	-	-	yes	single trench to be done
Winterhills Road 2 (WHR 2)	-	-	-	trench abandoned (not illustrated)
Winterhills Road Bridge	yes	-	-	nothing found (not illustrated)
Dadford Road (DAD1)	-	-	yes	single trench to be done
Dadford Road	-	-	yes	modern ditch only

Site Ref.	Mitigation requirements			Results
	Geophysical	Evaluation	Excavation	
(DAD2)				
Hazelborough Wood (HAZ1)	-	-	yes	modern ditch only
Biddlesden Road Bridge	yes	6 trenches	13000 sq m	IA settlement with iron smelting furnaces. Extends N and S of CPO boundary
BH4 (Whitfield Turn)	yes	5 trenches	7700 sq m	early Roman settlement with pottery kilns. Extends N of CPO boundary
Barley Mow Roundabout (Juniper Hill)		2 trenches	-	no archaeology, no further work required

Area excavations

Site SL3 (Fig. 2)

The site was discovered from surface finds of Roman and Iron Age pottery in 1996-97 and its form and extent revealed by geophysical survey both in that stage of work and subsequently in 2000. The site was shown to comprise a number of enclosure ditches of various sizes which appeared to be part of a settlement of more than one phase. Trial excavation in September 2000 largely confirmed the nature and extent of the site.

The area of topsoil stripping for excavation was informed by the results of the evaluation which was able to define the northern and southern limits of the site. The site has been shown to extend outside the excavated area on both the eastern and western sides. The western side lies outside the CPO boundary. The eastern side of the site has been cut by the modern hedgerow bounding the A43 road. It appears unlikely that any archaeological features survive in the modern road verge although this has not been demonstrated to be the case.

Site SL2 (Fig. 2)

This site lies about 250 m up slope from SL3 and was also discovered through surface finds and defined through geophysical survey. The survey showed a penannular gully, indicating the site of an Iron Age round-house, within a much larger sub-rectangular enclosure. Trial trench evaluation confirmed the extent and nature of the site and the shortage of other features within the enclosure.

Area excavation investigated whole site in a north-south direction although the enclosure continued west of the CPO boundary. A small part of the eastern boundary ditch could not be investigated due to the proximity of a badger set at the time of topsoil removal.

Site SL1 (Fig. 2)

This site was where the Roman road from Towcester was expected to cross the land-take for the proposed junction of the A413 Whittlebury Road with the new A43. Geophysical survey, failed to find a trace of the Roman road, nor any other archaeological features. Two trial trenches were excavated. One was positioned across a linear geophysical anomaly of

uncertain derivation which turned out to contain 19th-century material. The other was positioned close to the assumed route of the Roman road and revealed a linear hollow which may have marked the eroded course of the road.

Subsequently, a larger area was stripped to examine the linear hollow. This was undated, but appeared likely to be a former road or track in use during the medieval period. Up slope, traces of cobbling were present and two shallow pits. These features possibly represent the much eroded remains of the Roman road with flanking quarry pits.

It is unlikely that any significant archaeological remains will be found along the course of the road within the CPO boundary.

Site at Biddlesden Road Bridge (BRB) (Fig. 4)

This Iron Age site was discovered through geophysical reconnaissance and subsequent detailed survey over 1.84 ha in January-March 2000. The site consisted of a dispersed pattern of small enclosures and partial enclosures with some linear features. Trial trenching was undertaken in September 2000. This defined the main extent of the settlement which appeared to have been reached on the western side. Sporadic features were found away from the main area of settlement on the eastern side and features clearly extended outside the CPO boundary on the south-eastern side.

For the main excavation an area of 1.3 ha was stripped of topsoil. Soil was stockpiled on the eastern side of the site where archaeological features were shown to be absent. The full width of the demarcated road corridor was not stripped due to the presence of overhead power lines along the northern site boundary. A small number of gullies were shown to extend off site in the north-western corner.

Of particular note was the discovery of three iron-smelting furnaces close to the southern boundary of the site. Associated features extended beyond the CPO boundary in this direction.

The site limits have therefore been reached along the line of the road corridor in an east-west direction, but more features may be expected outside the excavation area on the northern and southern sides.

Site at Whitfield Turn (BH4) (Fig. 4)

This site was discovered through surface finds of Roman material in 1996-7. Geophysical survey in early 2000 revealed a somewhat irregular pattern of linear and other anomalies which were not readily interpretable. The limits of these anomalies were defined on the north-east and south-west sides, but they continued outside the CPO boundary to the north-west and were cut by the modern hedgerow to the south-east. Five trial trenches were then excavated to explore the extent and nature of the archaeology. These suggested that archaeological features, dating to the early Roman period, comprised ditches and a scatter of small features, but were not densely distributed.

The original Brief from Northamptonshire Heritage required overburden removal across the whole field (c. 300 m) within the road corridor. As the ground became too wet to use dump trucks, topsoil removal commenced with stripping a 15 m wide corridor and stockpiling the soil to one side. This effectively demonstrated that archaeological features were absent from the south-west and north-east ends of the site, and, following discussions with Northamptonshire Heritage, subsequent topsoil removal was confined to the central 150 m or so of the site.

As expected, archaeological features proved quite sparse. Some of the ditches, however, contained abundant pottery suggesting that the site was associated with domestic occupation. It is likely that any remains of structures would have been too shallow to have survived ploughing in the post-Roman period. Of particular interest was the presence of two pottery kilns of early Roman date.

The site limits have therefore been reached along the line of the road corridor, but the site extends outside the CPO boundary to the north-west, and to a limited extent into the modern road verge on the south-east side. The original ground surface, however, falls away to the south-east and it would appear unlikely that substantial archaeological remains are to be found here, even supposing they survived the construction of the present road.

Single trench excavations

A number of historical boundaries were the target of archaeological trenching to discover whether anything of their original form survived. Most of these features have survived into the modern landscape as field boundaries.

Due to difficulties of access, only two of these trenches (HAZ1 and DAD2) were completed in advance of compulsory purchase. Three were delayed until after compulsory purchase. Five others originally envisaged were abandoned with the agreement of Northamptonshire Heritage either due to the fact that they fell outside the CPO boundary, or because the boundaries proved to be active streams.

Whittlesbury Lane (WBR) (Fig. 3)

A 40 m trench is to be excavated across this boundary. The present hedgerow sits on a marked bank that may be a medieval woodland boundary. A water main runs along the boundary.

Winterhills Road 1 (WHR1) (Fig. 3)

A 25 m trench is to be excavated across this boundary. There is little evidence for any associated earthwork.

Dadford Road 1 (DAD1) (Fig. 3)

A 60 m trench is to be excavated across this boundary and field. There are no earthworks evident.

Dadford Road 2 (DAD2) (Fig. 3)

A trench excavated across this former field boundary revealed a shallow silted ditch containing exclusively modern fill.

Hazelborough Wood (HAZ1) (Fig. 3)

Prior to trenching, a survey was undertaken of the banks and ditches on the north side of the A43. A sinuous ditch was the most prominent feature traceable for much of the length of the road corridor from about 8 to 26 m distant from the present road edge. A bank was present in places on the north-west side of the ditch. It was probably originally continuous with the ditch but only survived as a prominent feature in the areas furthest away from the road. The bank and ditch feature was probably a woodland boundary although there were indications that it had been modified in places relatively recently.

Most of the bank and ditch lay outside the road corridor. A trench was excavated across it towards its northern end where it lay within the CPO boundary. Here the features were not well-preserved. No dating evidence was recovered from within the ditch, nor from under the remains of the bank, but the fact that the ditch still functioned as a modern drain suggested that, whatever its origin, it can be assumed to have been cleaned out at intervals in the recent past.

Other evaluations

Site SL4 (Fig. 2)

Roman pottery was recovered from the surface of this field in the preliminary stages of evaluation. Subsequent geophysical survey and trial trenching failed to identify any archaeological features. It is assumed that the surface finds represent scatters of material from a Roman site lying further up the slope to the west of the road corridor.

No further mitigation was required ahead of the 'Level 1' Watching Brief.

Site at Barley Mow Roundabout (Juniper Hill) (Fig. 5)

Irregular linear and other anomalies were discovered through a geophysical survey commissioned by Wessex Archaeology in 1993. These were thought possibly to indicate a partly enclosed site of prehistoric date. Trial trenching in September 2000 revealed a number of sub-surface features filled with a sterile reddish brown silt. No archaeological finds were recovered and it was concluded that the features were more likely to be natural than archaeological in origin.

No further mitigation was required ahead of the 'Level 1' Watching Brief.

Further work

Single Trench excavations outside Watching Brief contract

Whittlebury Lane (WBR)
Winterhills Road 1 (WHR)
Dadford Road 1 (DAD1)

Level 1 Watching Brief on groundworks within CPO boundary

Illustrations

- Fig. 1 Location of A43 road improvement, Northamptonshire
- Fig. 1.1 Location of A43 road improvement, Oxfordshire
- Fig. 2 A43 route south of Towcester
- Fig. 3 A43 route, Silverstone bypass
- Fig. 4 A43 route, Syresham to Whitfield
- Fig. 5 A43 route, Juniper Hill

Text: A Mudd

Illustrations: C Hegarty

Northamptonshire Archaeology
A service of Northamptonshire County Council
Planning, Transportation and Environment
March 2001

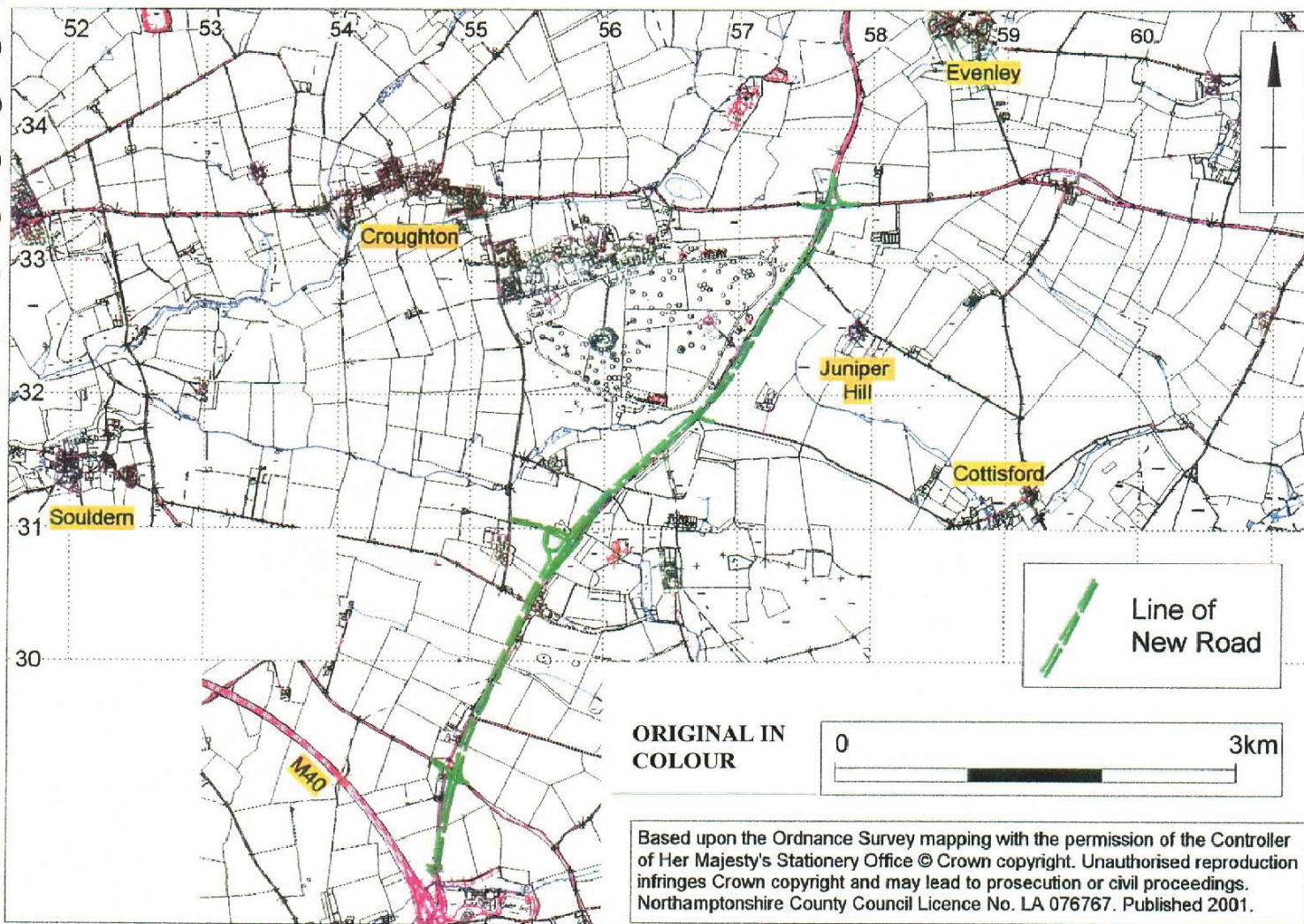
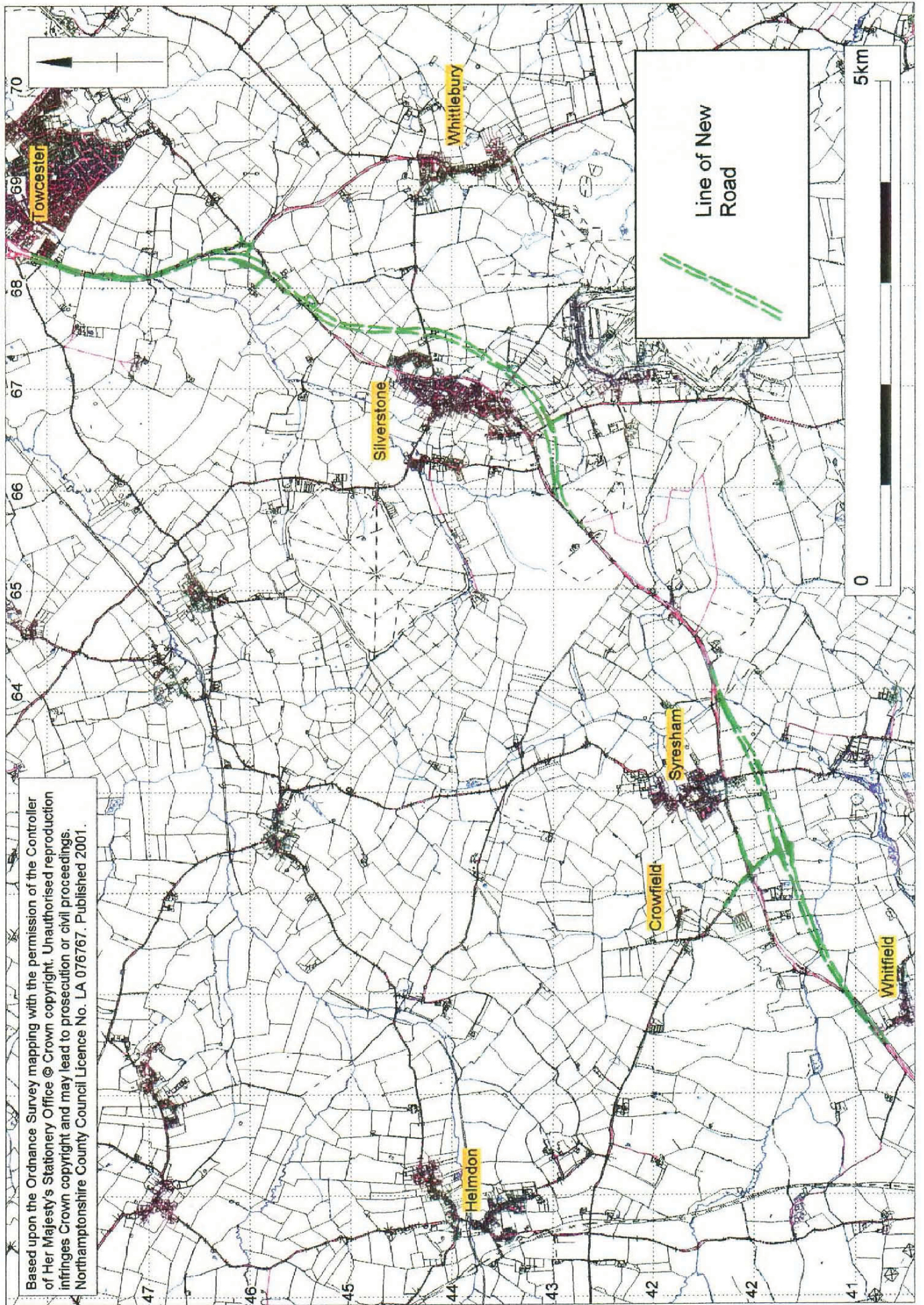


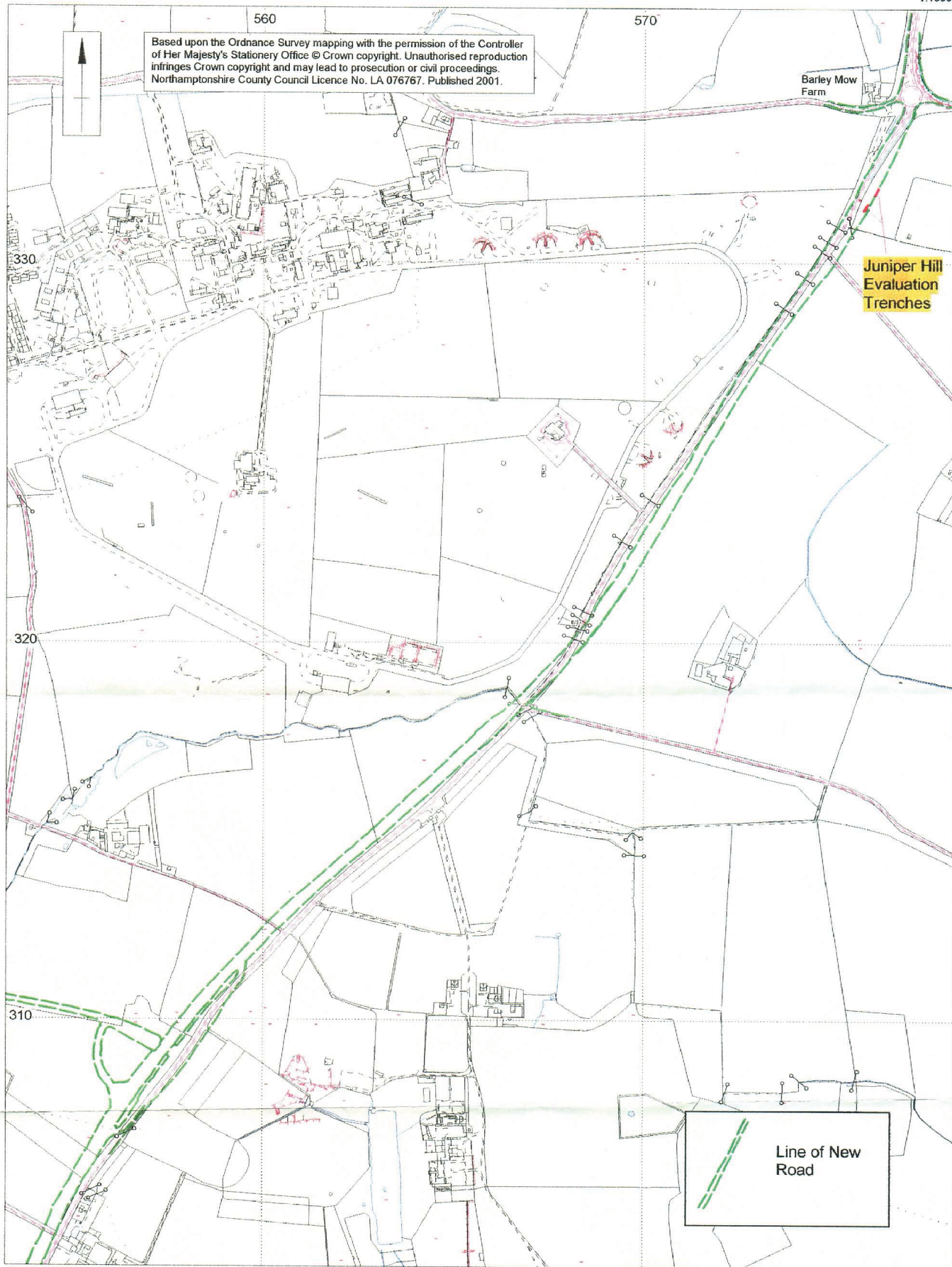
Figure 1.1



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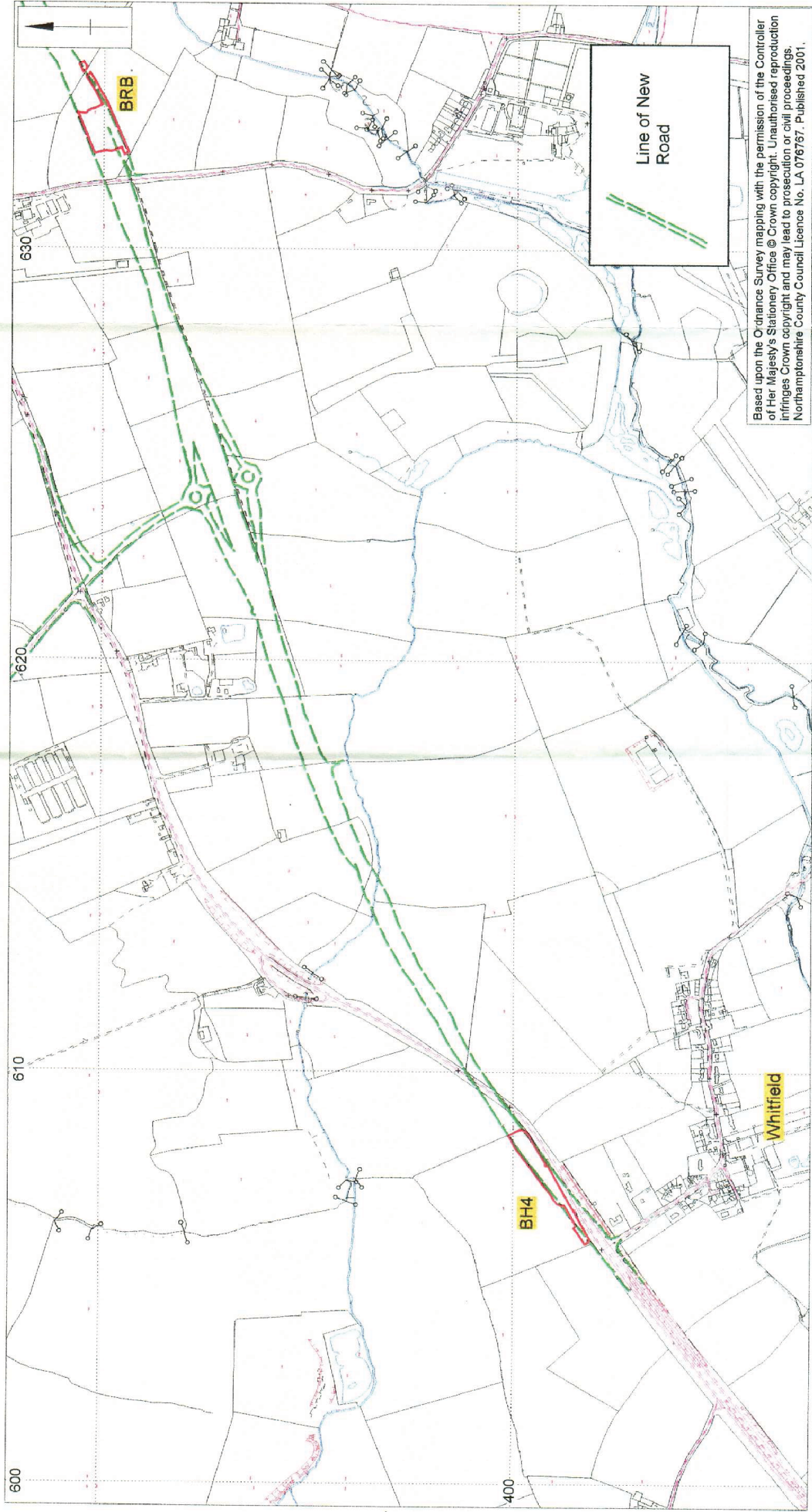
ORIGINAL IN
COLOUR

Figure 1



ORIGINAL AT A3 ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

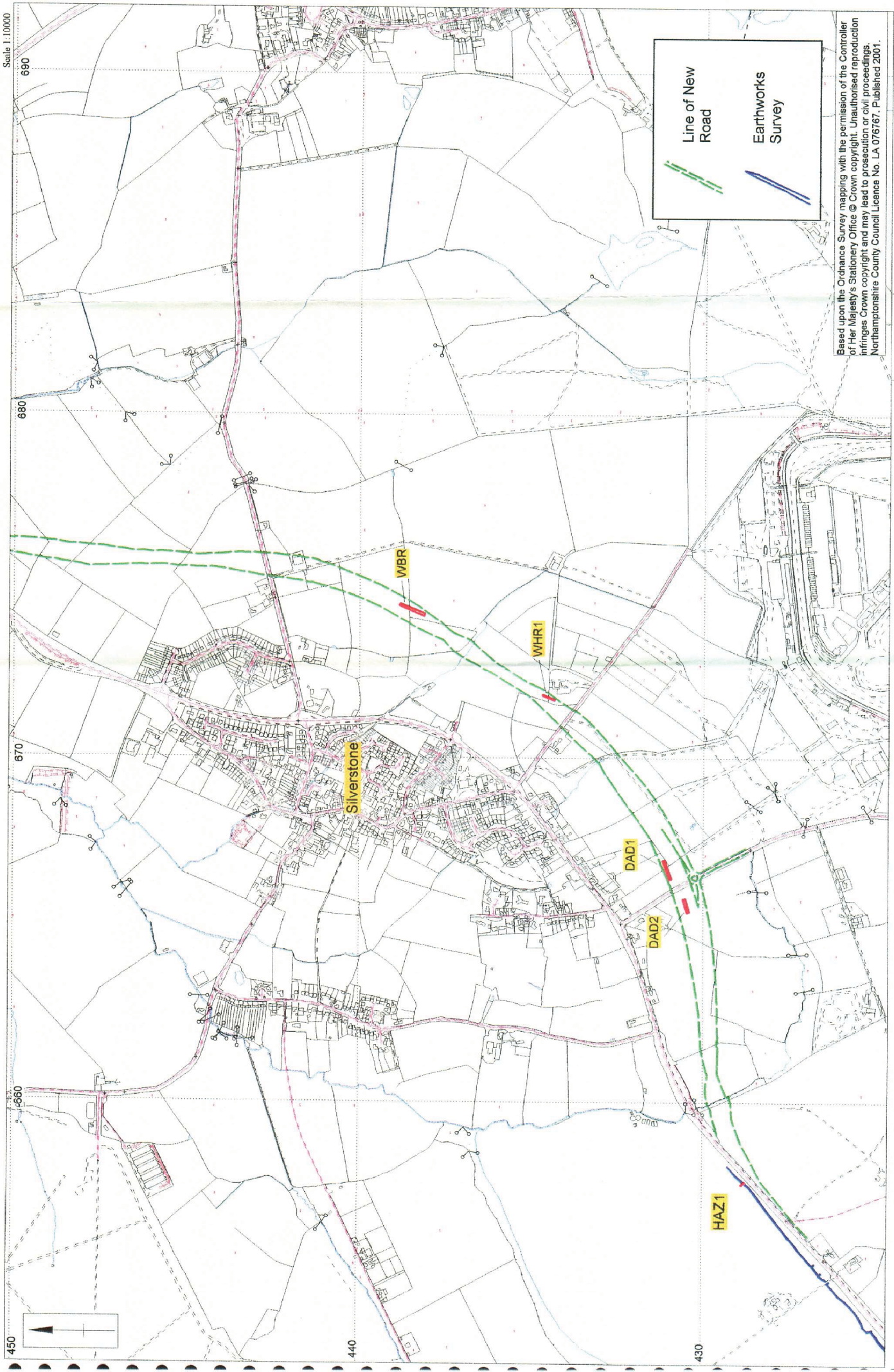
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ORIGINAL AT A3

ORIGINAL IN
COLOUR

Figure 4

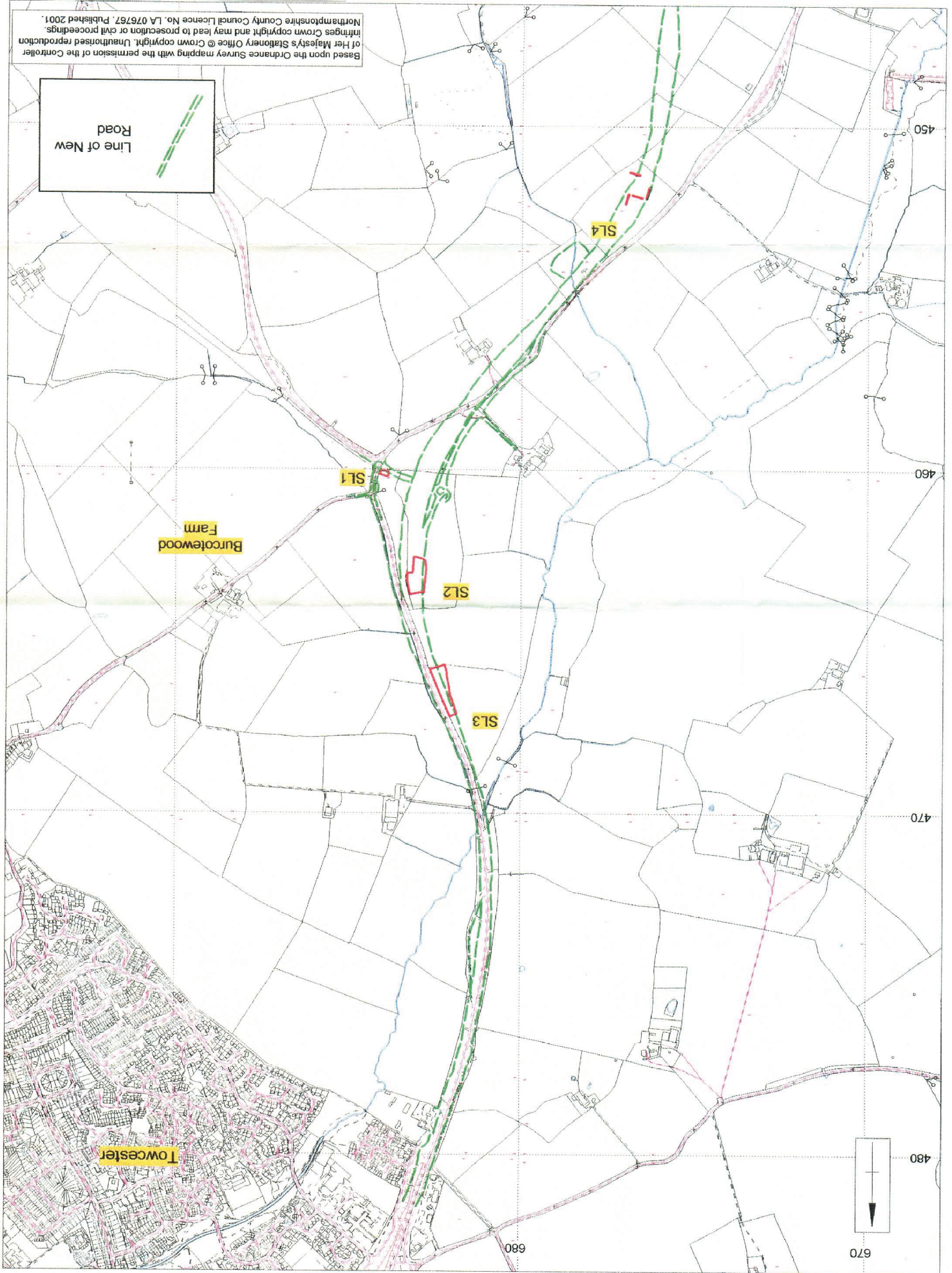


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ORIGINAL AT A3

ORIGINAL IN COLOUR

Figure 3



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Line of New Road

ORIGINAL AT A3
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