

Salt Way Banbury



Heritage Assessment

oxfordarchaeology



southsouthsouth

September 2012

Client: LDA Design

Issue No: 2

OA Job No: 5441

NGR: SP 440 390

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SALTWAY, BANBURY

Heritage Assessment
FOR
LDA DESIGN

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by LDA Design on behalf of Cherwell District Council to prepare an assessment of the historical significance of Salt Way, which runs along the south side of Banbury. The assessment is intended to inform planning decisions relating to residential development on land adjoining the Salt Way.

1.1.2 The aims of this assessment are to:

- review the evidence that Salt Way was used to carry salt and its likely date of origin;
- assess the significance of salt ways generally and Salt Way in particular;
- review the history of the trackway running south from Drayton to Broughton Road;
- assess the significance of both routes in their landscape context.

1.1.3 The criteria used here to assess values and significance have been taken from the Highways Agency Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (HA 208/07) which offers the most detailed guidance for assessing these issues. Reference has also been made to the policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the guidance produced by English Heritage on the setting of heritage assets (2011).

2 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1.1 Salt Way lies to the south of the town of Banbury. At its west end it follows the line of Banbury Road from North Newington Mill to Bloxham Road (A361). The trackway continues on the east side of that road, which crosses the northern tip of Broughton parish, in open countryside for *c* 0.5 km before entering the parish of Banbury. The recent development on the north side of Salt Way begins just west of the Bloxham Road (A361). The playing fields of Easington School extend for *c* 0.5 km, increasing the open space around the trackway. For *c* 0.75 km at its east end Salt Way runs along the boundary between Banbury and Bodicote parishes. The entire length is designated as a Restricted Byway and National Cycle Network (Route 5).

2.1.2 The trackway east of Drayton runs due south from Stratford Road (A422) for *c* 1.75 km, past Withycombe Farm. It then heads to the south-west for *c* 1 km until it meets Broughton Road (B4035), close to the end of Salt Way. It originally would have joined the Salt Way (see figure 3), but recent road realignments have changed this junction. The northern portion is a Restricted Bridleway, but southwards from Withycombe Farm it is designated as a Bridleway. Its whole length goes through open countryside.

- 2.1.3 Banbury and its surrounding area lie on the Lias geological formation, comprising mudstone, limestone and sandstone. The west end of Salt Way rises from the valley of the Sor Brook, *c* 100 m OD, levelling out past Crouch Hill at *c* 140 m OD. East of the A361 it begins to drop gently towards Bodicote, ending at *c* 115 m OD.
- 2.1.4 The north-south length of the trackway east of Drayton is fairly level, at *c* 145 m OD, although the land drops away to the west towards Sor Brook. After it changes direction the trackway slopes down until it reaches Broughton Road at *c* 115 m OD.

3 SOURCES CONSULTED

- 3.1.1 Cherwell District Council supplied a copy of the archaeological desk-based assessment prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership (EDP) to accompany a planning application to build housing to the south of Salt Way. Contact was also made with Rob Kinchin-Smith of the Banbury Civic Trust, who supplied information including extracts from responses to the site appraisal report prepared by Halcrow for the development of Cherwell's Core Strategy.
- 3.1.2 Further research into published material, documentary sources and historic maps was carried out using the Sackler and Bodleian libraries in Oxford, sources held by OA and the Internet. The catalogues of the Oxfordshire History Centre were examined, but no additional relevant source material was identified.
- 3.1.3 The alignments of Salt Way and the trackway east of Drayton are shown on Figure 1, together with selected, relevant historic landscape features and buildings.

4 AGES OF TRACKS

4.1 Salt Way

- 4.1.1 There is no evidence available to ascribe a prehistoric origin to Salt Way, although some form of track might have been in use during this period. There is evidence for prehistoric activity in the area from the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, on the north slopes of Crouch Hill *c* 350 m north of Salt Way and further west *c* 100 m north of Salt Way. Further Neolithic material has also been recorded at Wykham Farm, *c* 400 m south of Salt Way (EDP 2012).
- 4.1.2 There is also evidence for activity dating from the Romano-British period in the vicinity of Salt Way. A building, probably a farmstead, was excavated just south of Broughton Road, *c* 120m north of the trackway in the 1960s and a findspot was recorded south of that site, immediately on the north side of Salt Way (*ibid*). A villa site was identified at Wykham Park, *c* 1 km south of Salt Way. The name 'Wykham' combines the term 'vicus', a Romano-British trading settlement, and 'ham', an early Anglo-Saxon settlement (Ekwall 1960, 516).
- 4.1.3 The possible Roman Roads around Banbury are shown on Figure 4. The principal Roman road in the area is the Port Way (RR161A), part of the north-south road running from Silchester to Watling Street in Northamptonshire, which runs past the east side of Banbury, *c* 2 km from the east end of Salt Way. Another significant road has been identified running east from the Fosse Way through Warwickshire and into Oxfordshire (RR56). This road originated from Droitwich and may have been one of the routes along which salt from that town was distributed (Margary 1967, 153).
- 4.1.4 The presence of this road led to a significant Roman settlement at Swalcliffe Lea, *c* 4 km to the west of Salt Way (figure 4). Margary suggests that the road split north-west of Swalcliffe, with one branch continuing eastwards to Broughton and Twyford and then to Finmere, with a section recorded in Astrop Park (RR56a). Based on the

alignment of this road would have been along Wykham Lane, *c* 1 km south of Salt Way. The second branch was further to the north (RR56aa), through Shutford, North Newington and Neithrop, intended to link up with Banbury Lane, the ancient road to Northampton (Margary 1967, 154). The obvious route of RR56aa east of North Newington would not have been along Salt Way, but would have lain further north, as shown on Figure 4. The alignment is followed by a modern footpath from North Newington to Neithrop, but that track does not appear on historic maps.

- 4.1.5 Salt was produced in Droitwich during this period, but there is no real evidence that these routes were in use for the carriage of salt, although it is feasible.
- 4.1.6 Droitwich continued to be a major source of salt from the early medieval period (410-1066), but Banbury itself was not a significant market for the commodity and was bypassed by salt ways (Blair 1994, 86). Its associated distribution network has been studied in some detail, with research using place names, early charters and the mapping of roads and tracks over time. Whitley notes 'Sealt Street' leading to Stratford-on-Avon was recorded in 1016 (Whitley 1923, 13) and Houghton has identified two principal routes east from that town. The southern of these ran from Eatington to Tysoe and then south-eastwards to the south of Wroxton and on to Adderbury, with the alignment corresponding to that of modern Salt Way (Figure 4). There is little overlap between the medieval salt route and the Roman roads. From Adderbury the route would continue to Princes Risborough, one of the manors with salt rights recorded in Domesday (Houghton 1929, 9). Hooke and Blair also show this route as an early medieval salt way, Hooke identifying three later 'salt' place-names on the section near Banbury (Hooke 1981, 138). Blair gives these as 'Saltstret' in Swalcliffe, the Salt Way itself and 'Saltestreet' in Stratton Audley (Blair 1994, 86).
- 4.1.7 An aerial photograph from 1947 (Figure 2) shows large areas of ridge and furrow in the fields around Salt Way. The evidence clearly shows that the Salt Way is earlier than the ridge and furrow in that at no point does the track cut the ridge and furrow, a definite headland can be seen in places next to it and the orientation of the ridge and furrow is different on either side of Salt Way.
- 4.1.8 The evidence therefore supports the hypothesis that Salt Way was part of the early medieval salt route from Droitwich, respected by medieval ridge and furrow.
- 4.1.9 The Salt Way appears as a road on both Jeffery's map from 1767 and Davies Map of 1797 (figure 3) and on the subsequent Ordnance Survey maps, without any significant change. Writing in 1841 Beesley refers to the Saltway, and says that Ogilby's Survey shows that it continued through Adderbury and crossed the Cherwell at Nell's Bridge as the medieval salt route had done (Beesley 1841, 16). Ogilby's maps do suggest that the Salt Way was a significant road in the early post-medieval period (Ogilby 1675, 29-31). Beesley describes the route as having been in constant use by heavy traffic before the Oxford Canal was constructed. The date at which salt ceased to be the principal load is undetermined. However, the route's loss of importance was likely to be linked to the construction of the canal and turnpiking of the Banbury to Broughton road in the 18th century (VCH IX, 85).

4.2 Track east of Drayton

- 4.2.1 There is no archaeological evidence available to ascribe a prehistoric origin to the track east of Drayton. However, it does not mean that a track did not exist. Roman activity has been identified at Drayton, including a possible villa with a mosaic pavement (VCH I, 337) and there may have been links to the farmstead near Broughton Road, which was located at the southern end of the existing trackway. In addition Margary suggests the existence of a road linking Hanwell to Broughton and South Newington (R562), which appears to follow the trackway from Drayton to Broughton (Margary 1967 155) (figure 4).

- 4.2.2 The earliest possible documentary reference to the trackway comes from a terrier of 1601, which refers by name to a number of tracks, including 'Bloxham path' (VCH IX, 103). The trackway follows the easiest route between Drayton and Bloxham, along the ridge on the east side of the Sor Brook Valley and is likely to be the route referred to.
- 4.2.3 The earliest available map to show the trackway is Jeffery's map from 1767, it is also shown on Davies map of 1797 (figure 3). Both show the alignment to be the same as the modern one. The latter also shows Withycombe Farm (LB Grade II), which was built in the 17th century. The parish of Drayton was enclosed in 1802, but Dawson's map of Banbury from 1835 and the subsequent Ordnance Survey maps all show the track surviving on its original alignment, with a continuation to the north of Drayton shown on the Ordnance Survey maps until the 1970s.

5 HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

- 5.1.1 The land on the west side of Banbury stretching from Drayton in the north, to Bloxham in the south, and eastwards to Bodicote on the south side of Banbury is mainly in agricultural use, mainly arable fields. There are some areas of woodland on the edge of the Sor Brook Valley and Wykham Park, c 1 km to the south of Salt Way was laid out as parkland in the 18th century. The A361 from Bloxham to Banbury runs northwards through the area, which is crossed further north by the B4035 from Broughton to Banbury. A number of minor roads cross it in an east-west direction, including Bloxham Grove Road, Wykham Lane and the Salt Way track.
- 5.1.2 Enclosure of the parishes of Banbury and Drayton was completed in the first decade of the 19th century. The open field pre-inclosure boundaries of Banbury have been mapped for the Victoria County History volume, based on sources including the inclosure and tithe maps and a map of Wykham Park from 1688 (figure 1). Salt Way is shown, implying that it was in existence during the medieval period. Many of the pre-inclosure boundaries have survived to the present day, including a long stretch (c 1.3 km) running alongside the north side of Salt Way from just west of the A361 to the east side of the Easington school playing field. Three other stretches corresponded with parish boundaries: the section next to Broughton Road, a section north-west of Crouch Farm and a further stretch towards the east end. Three farms pre-dating enclosure have survived (figure 1). Withycombe Farm, to the north of Salt Way and just east of the other trackway dates from the 17th century. Wykham Farmhouse and Crouch Farmhouse, south of the Salt Way, are both late 17th or early 18th century. All three are Grade II Listed Buildings.
- 5.1.3 The present landscape pattern shows a typical 19th century enclosed landscape, mostly covered in regularly shaped fields of moderate size with straight boundaries. Some clumps of woodland survive, particularly on the slopes of the Sor Brook Valley. The landscape also incorporates earlier features such as the 17th - 18th century farmhouses, the medieval open field and parish boundaries, relics of ridge and furrow and based around an earlier road network.

6 VALUE OF SALT WAY AND ITS ENVIRONS

- 6.1.1 The evidence indicates that Salt Way originated during the early medieval period, forming part of the distribution network for salt from the major production site at Droitwich. It may have earlier origins, but this could not be proved based on the evidence examined. It is relatively unusual in that it has not been adopted as part of the modern road network, despite having been an important road in the early post-medieval period, but remains a trackway throughout all of its length still passing

through open countryside. This may suggest that any below-ground evidence associated with its earlier use may be relatively undisturbed.

- 6.1.2 No salt ways have been identified on the National Heritage List as Scheduled Monuments. The Banbury Salt Way would therefore not appear a candidate for a designation of national significance. No archaeological investigations have been carried out along Salt Way and there is no non-documentary evidence which might confirm its date. The archaeological value of this feature (as opposed to its historic landscape value discussed below) would be Medium, defined as ‘Designated or undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objectives’ (DMRB, 2007, A5/8). This value can be justified by its association with the early medieval Droitwich salt industry, its position within the regional road network since the early medieval period and its influence in the development of the local landscape from the early medieval period onwards.
- 6.1.3 There is no archaeological evidence associated with the trackway east of Drayton. However, Margary has proposed the existence of a minor Roman road between Hanwell and Broughton (RR562), which would have followed the alignment of this trackway. It is mentioned in a document from 1601 and appears on 17th century and subsequent maps. The archaeological value of this feature (as opposed to its historic landscape value discussed below) would be Medium, defined as ‘Designated or undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objectives’ (DMRB, 2007, A5/8). This value can be justified by its probable position within the regional road network since the Roman period and its influence in the development of the local landscape from the Roman period onwards. If it does not date to the Roman period its value would depend to a certain extent on its date.
- 6.1.4 For both routes, there is some potential for below-ground evidence to survive for their use during earlier periods. Where modern roads have been constructed over early routeways such evidence is unlikely to survive.
- 6.1.5 The historic landscape south and west of Banbury through which these trackways run is predominantly made up of early 19th century enclosed fields with 17th century and later farms. The earlier ridge and furrow seen to exist throughout the area in 1947 (figure 2) has not survived, except for one field next to Crouch Farmhouse where it is just discernible (figure 1). Significant stretches of the alignment of Salt Way correspond with medieval pre-inclosure open field and parish boundaries and the area contains both important Roman and early medieval roads and trackways.
- 6.1.6 The Historic Landscape Character of the area can be considered to be of High Importance, defined as ‘Well preserved historic landscapes, exhibiting considerable coherence, time-depth or other critical factors’ (DRMB, 2007, A7/10). The value can be justified by the coherence of the early 19th century field system which also displays features which give it a demonstrable time-depth, such as the earlier farmhouses, the medieval parish and open field boundaries and the Roman and early medieval roads running through it.
- 6.1.7 ‘The Hedgerow Regulations 1997: A Guide to the Law and Good Practice’ (Defra 2002) protects hedges which ‘form an integral part of a pre-1845 field system, or a pre 1870 enclosure field system’ (Section 7.19). The hedges associated with the parish boundaries and medieval open field boundaries will be protected under these Regulations as being ‘an integral part of a pre 1845 field system, and those associated with the early 19th century enclosure, would be protected as being part of a ‘pre 1870 enclosure field system’.
- 6.1.8 In addition Salt Way and the trackway east of Drayton are significant for their amenity value. Salt Way forms part of National Cycle Route 5 and the West Midlands Cycle route and is included on the route of the Bodicote Circular Walk, published by

Cherwell District Council. Both trackways feature in the Banbury Fringe Circular Walk. Salt Way is also a Nature Trail, its hedges and rough grassland verges supporting a variety of plants and birds, but is particularly noted for the range of butterfly species seen. The natural environment aspects of the trackways are not discussed in further detail.

- 6.1.9 Both trackways provide excellent views across open countryside, including views of historic features such as Couch Hill. These routes are well-used and the open views, despite the hedges along the route, are an important part of their modern and historic character.
- 6.1.10 Salt Way currently acts as a natural limit to the southward growth of Banbury. This limit helps to preserve the historic separation of Broughton, Bloxham, Bodicote and Banbury into distinct settlements of different character.
- 6.1.11 If development were to occur on the south side of Salt Way there could be direct physical impacts arising from any upgrading of Salt Way to provide site access, which may have a severe impact on any below-ground evidence for its earlier phases. There is also the potential for breeches of ‘important’ hedgerows and pre-inclosure boundaries.
- 6.1.12 Salt Way is a heritage asset of medium value and development to its south would have an adverse impact on its setting and change its landscape context. Currently it has open countryside along the entire southern extent. It would also represent the first stage in the erosion of separation between the historic settlements, for example Banbury and Bodicote.
- 6.1.13 Using the assessment criteria for defining the magnitude of impacts on the historic landscape and its setting, the magnitude of impact from any development to the south of Salt Way would result in a Moderate Impact defined as: ‘Changes to many key landscape elements, parcels or components, visual change to many key aspects of the historic landscape, noticeable differences in noise or sound quality, considerable changes to use or access; resulting in moderate changes to historic landscape character (DRMB, 2007, A7/16).
- 6.1.14 A Moderate Impact on a Landscape of High Importance would lead to a Large Effect on the Historic Landscape and its Heritage assets. This is based on the value of the resource and the magnitude of impact as discussed above, following the guidance and matrix provided by the Highways Agency, reproduced below (DRMB, 2007, A7/17).

Table 1: The significance of effects matrix

VALUE/SENSITIVITY	Very High	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Large	Large or Very Large	Very Large
	High	Neutral	Slight	Moderate/ Slight	Moderate/L arge	Large/Very Large
	Medium	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Moderate	Moderate/ Large
	Low	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight	Slight/ Moderate
	Negligible	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral/ Slight	Neutral/ Slight	Slight
	No change	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	
	MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT					

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 Salt Way is on the balance of the evidence part of the distribution network for salt from Droitwich, and dates from the early medieval period (AD 410 –1066). There is also an aerial photograph showing that medieval ridge and furrow respects the line of Salt Way confirming at least a medieval origin. This assessment has judged that the Salt Way is of medium value based upon its association with the early medieval Droitwich salt industry, its position within the regional road network since the early medieval period and its influence in the development of the local landscape from the early medieval period onwards. There is also some possibility that below-ground evidence for the early road structure or its use may survive.
- 7.1.2 The trackway east of Drayton may have been the route of a Roman Road. It is likely to have been the 'Bloxham Path mentioned in a 1601 terrier for Drayton parish and appears on historic maps from the 17th century onwards. It is likely to be of medium value based on its probable position within the regional road network since the Roman period and its influence in the development of the local landscape from the Roman period onwards.
- 7.1.3 The Historic Landscape character of the area can be considered to be of High Importance. This is based upon the fact the area is predominantly made up of a coherent early 19th century enclosed system but with elements which give it a time-depth value. These include 17th 18th century farmhouses, identifiable pre-inclosure open field boundaries, ridge and furrow (though only a small part of that seen in 1947 has survived), significant stretches of an early medieval road (Salt Way) and part of the Roman Road network.
- 7.1.4 Not only will the pre-inclosure hedges be protected under the Hedgerow Regulations, given the early 19th century date of enclosure, those dating to enclosure will also be protected.
- 7.1.5 Development south of Salt Way would have potential physical impacts on the trackway itself, if new access routes were constructed. There would also be serious impacts on the setting of Salt Way and the historic landscape character of the area. The impacts of any development to the south of Salt Way, on the heritage resource have been defined as Moderate leading to a Large significant, negative Effect.
- 7.1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (CLG 2012) acknowledges that heritage assets represent an irreplaceable resource, and stresses the desirability of sustaining and enhancing their significance including the historic landscape character (NPPF 2012, Sect 126, 170). The proposed development would conflict with these aims.

Appendix 1: Bibliography and List of Sources Consulted

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Maps

- Plot's Map of Oxfordshire, 1677
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 Davies' Map of Oxfordshire, 1797
 Dawson's Map of Banbury, 1835
 1st Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1:10,560, 1885-7
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 Ordnance Survey 1: 0,560 Map, 1923
 Ordnance Survey 1:10,560 Map, 1955

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Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 Map, 1992-5

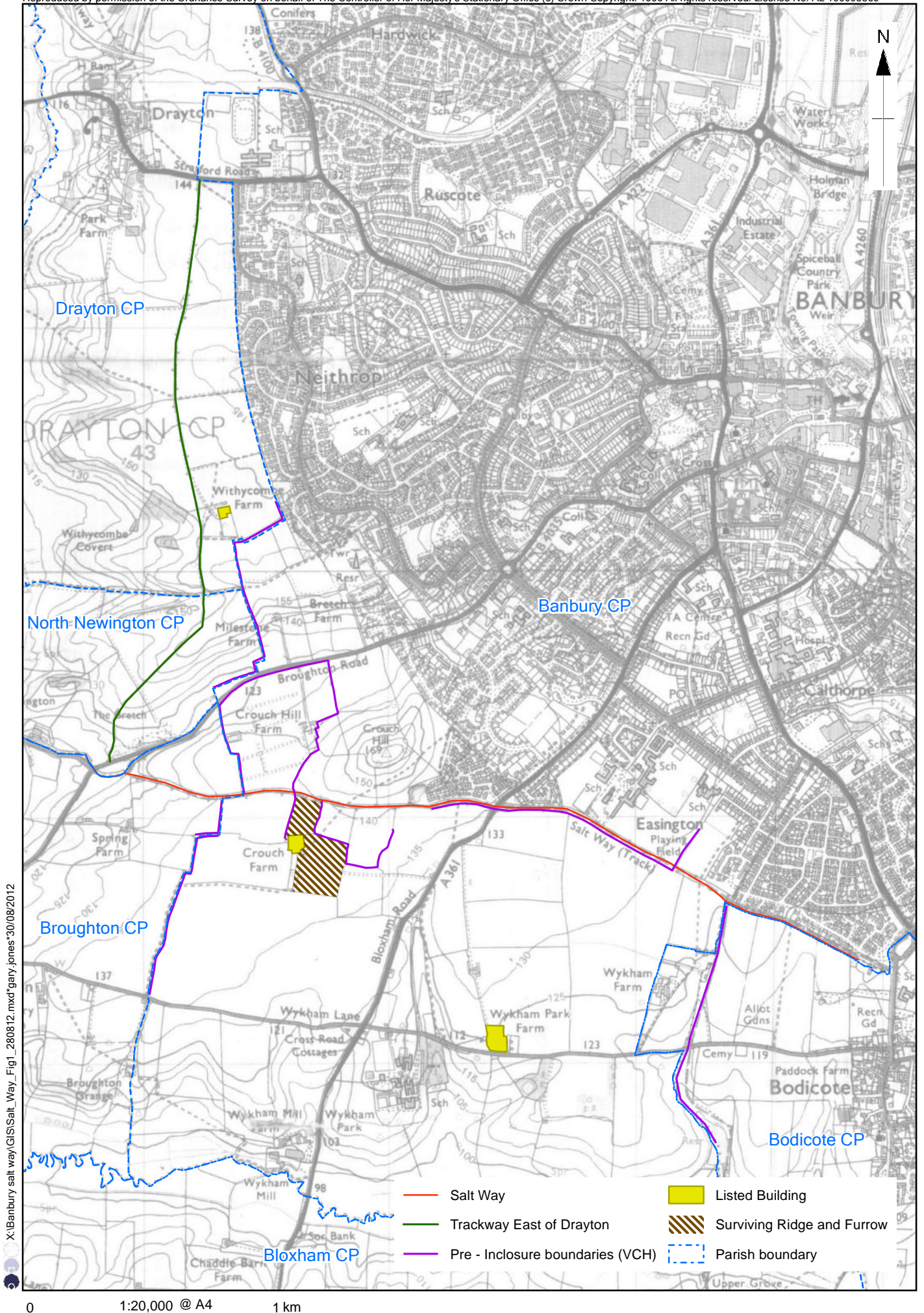
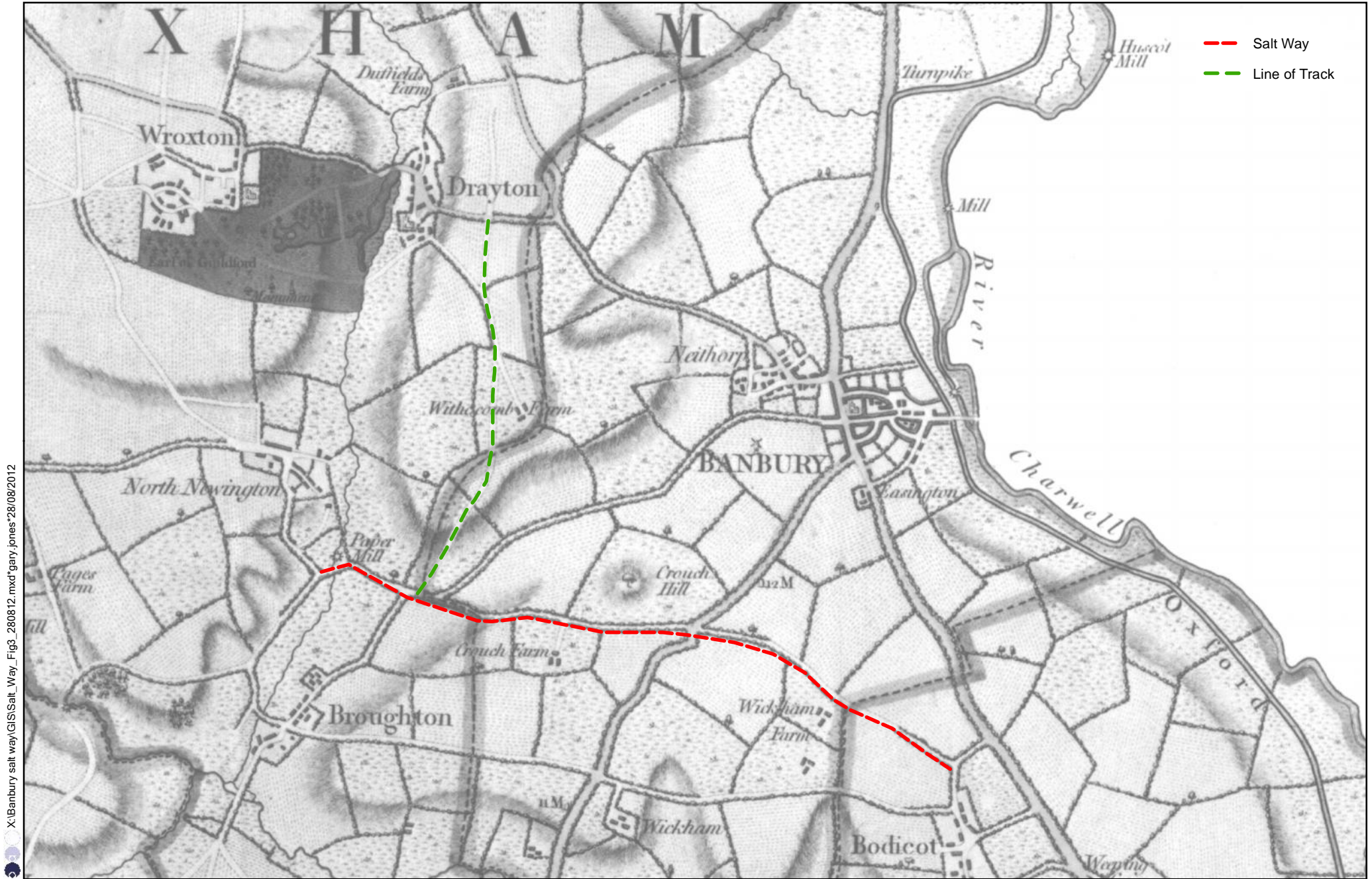


Figure 1: Selected Heritage Assessment discussed in text

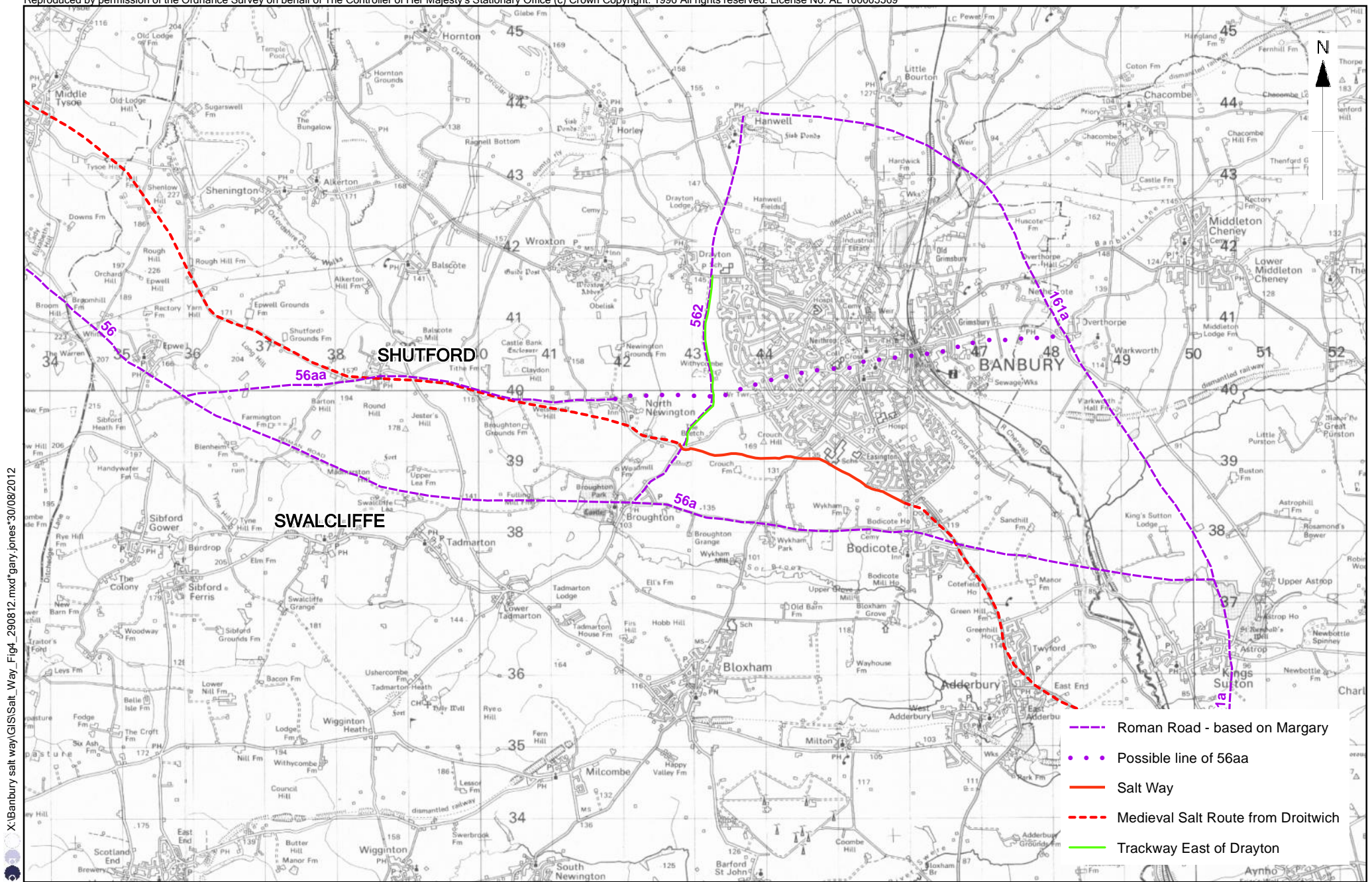


— Salt Way



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Figure 3: Davies' Map of Oxfordshire, 1797



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- Roman Road - based on Margary
- Possible line of 56aa
- Salt Way
- - - Medieval Salt Route from Droitwich
- Trackway East of Drayton

0 1:70,000 @ A4 2.5 km

Figure 4: Possible Roman & early Medieval Roads discussed in text



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oanorth@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
f: +44 (0) 1223 850599
e: [oaeast@thehumanjourney.net](mailto: oaeast@thehumanjourney.net)
w: <http://thehumanjourney.net>



Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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