

Briefing Note

Service: Highway and Transport

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Salisbury to Stonehenge via Porton cycle route

Background

Wiltshire Council and local communities have an aspiration to create a predominantly traffic-free cycle route to link Salisbury and Stonehenge to:

- Provide leisure routes for cyclists, walkers and disabled people.
- Improve access to Salisbury and Amesbury for the residents of the Winterbournes.
- Improve access from Durrington and Larkhill to Amesbury.
- Provide commuter routes for employees at Porton Down, reducing traffic through the Winterbournes.
- Encourage more tourists to stay in the Salisbury area and to travel to Stonehenge by cycling rather than driving.
- Encourage tourists to explore the wider Stonehenge World Heritage Site, e.g. Woodhenge.

A survey carried out by Winterbourne Parish Council showed that 80% of residents agreed that they want a cycle route to avoid the A338, 80% wanted a cycle route to Salisbury and 50% wanted a better route to Porton Down. However, there is insufficient verge/pavement width along the A338 to provide a pedestrian/cyclist shared-use path.

The current national cycleway route (NCN 45) through the Woodford Valley is an on-road route for leisure and tourism on the west of the A345, but it does not provide for the residents of the Winterbournes, Porton, Gomeldon and Idmiston, which are situated on a corridor to the east of the A345 with no connection to the NCN route 4km away. As it is on-road, it is also not as attractive to less confident leisure riders or tourists with younger children. The completed route via Porton would provide a circular route with the existing Woodford Valley route.

The council has investigated various options in consultation with stakeholders such as businesses at Porton Down, employers and parish councils.

Timeline

Feasibility studies have been carried out by Sustrans on behalf of the council looking at the section between Ford and Tanners Lane. The initial study in 2016 recommended a new traffic-free path between Green Lane and Hurdcott. The second study in 2019 found that some landowners were opposed to this route.

The potential routes are shown in Appendix 1.

A further study was carried out by Sustrans in 2023 to establish and identify road safety improvements on Roman Road between Green Lane and Spire View, particularly so at the Laverstock Turn where traffic behaviour causes intimidation of pedestrians and cyclists, particularly in darker hours.

The results from this study are provided in Appendix 2 (attached).

Current situation

The Sustrans high-level report in 2019 looked at the options for a potential route from Ford to Hurdcott. The report identified two main viable route options - sections F3 & H1. The landowner has previously agreed to route F3 across his land. H1 also has permission from the landowner to access his land to make the necessary improvements for cycling. However, the F3 option means that Cyclists (& pedestrians) would need to travel for 750 metres along Roman Road.

As shown in Appendix 2, making Roman Road safe for cyclists will require on-road improvements. This is likely to include measures to reduce the volume and speed of traffic and may involve the use of permits to allow only local vehicles to access the road.

There is a secondary route option (F2) which reduces the length users would need to travel along Roman Road, thereby reducing the risk of accidents. However, the landowners have both previously said they would not be open to their land being utilised for cycling. If their stance is maintained, and this is the preferred option, the council would need to consider pursuing a compulsory purchase order (CPO) to obtain the land required for this route. See advice under remarks.

Finance

Any decision making about the preferred option of the route alignment (F2 & F3) needs to consider the following.

- The F3 & H1 route options are likely to cost approximately, £500-£750K to complete (including on-road improvements along Roman Road). It is unlikely to attract government funding because of its probable low BCR.
- The F2 & H1 route options will likely require a CPO leading to significant delays and increased costs to complete this scheme.
- The remaining sections of the Salisbury to Amesbury route require further work to be undertaken to ensure the entire length of route is viable. There is potential for further compulsory land purchase with other sections of the route. Given this, and to keep the council's legal costs to a minimum, further feasibility and possible design work of the entire route needs to be undertaken.
- A topographical survey of the full route is likely to cost approximately £200,000.

Funding is not currently available for this work.

This is a rural route with high costs (i.e. a lower BCR than urban routes), involving land negotiations and possibly compulsory purchase. As such it will take some years to develop plans and deliver improvements here.

To gain funding from the government, it is likely that the council would need to demonstrate that it can deliver a high-quality route (i.e. compliant with LTN 1/20 design standards), that it connects to Salisbury and Amesbury at the other end. The soon to be published Salisbury and Wiltshire-wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) set out the

schemes in the context of a comprehensive programme of short-term and long-term improvements.

Remarks

The next step is for a decision to be made on which of the route alignments the council wishes to take. Once a full route alignment has been agreed a topographical study can be commissioned, subject to funding. The survey will help inform any future design work.

When considering a CPO, the following should be taken into account.

It is difficult to quantify how much a scheme requiring compulsory purchase powers is likely to cost. Essentially, it will depend on the complexity of the scheme. In assessing the costs associated with this CPO you will need to consider various workstreams and whether the work will be carried out internally or by external CPO experts.

However, to give an overview of the types of workstreams involved, please see below (NB: the overview does not include surveyors' costs and internal officer resources):

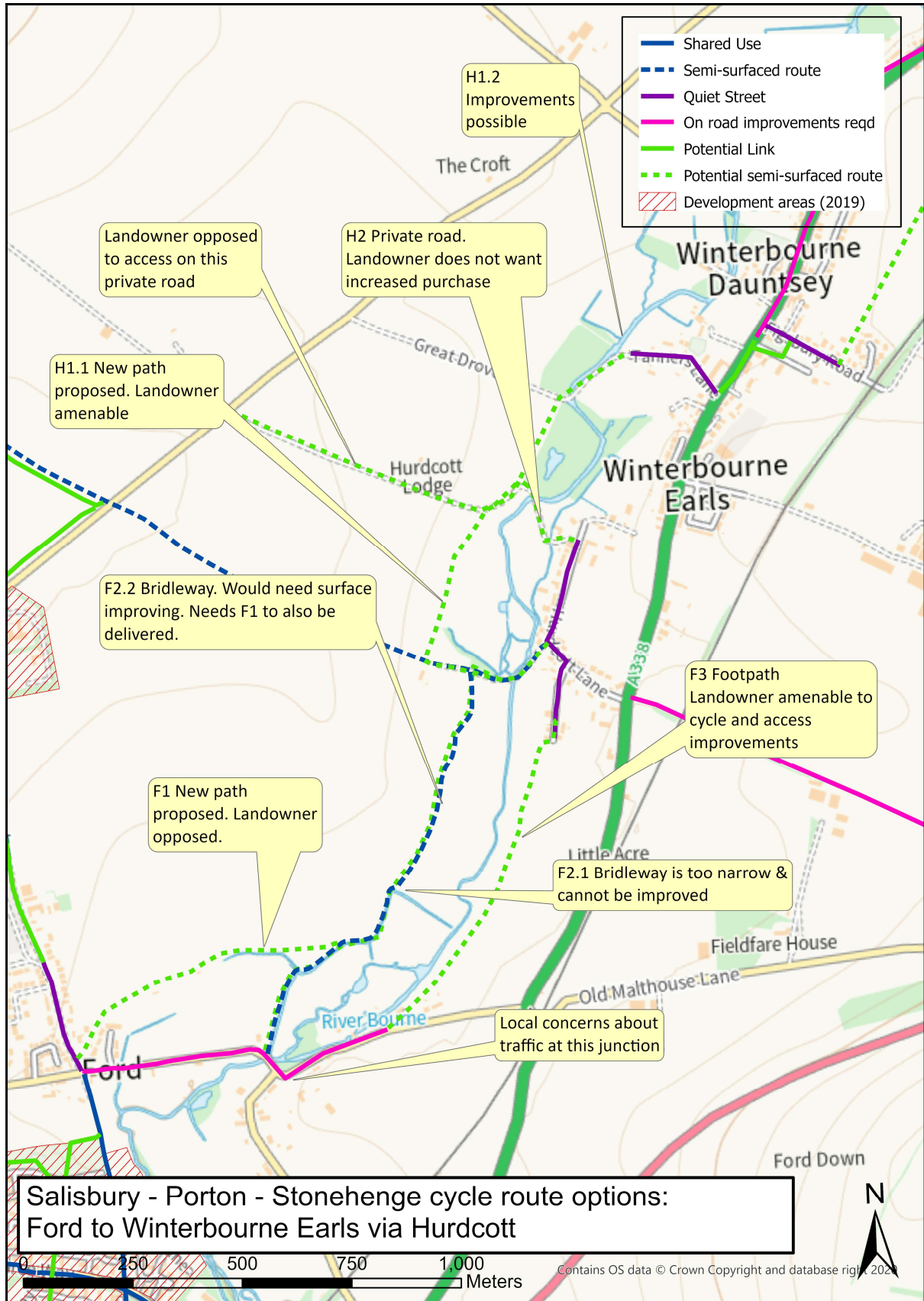
Costs involved:

- Purchase by agreement costs – there will be the associated costs with negotiating with the landowners and owners of rights/parties benefiting from covenants whether these negotiations are successful or not.
- Legal costs associated with the making and confirmation of the CPO. These costs will increase if objections are received and need to be dealt with at a public inquiry or by written representations – the council will need to pay the Planning Inspectorate's costs. Barrister fees may also be applicable if a barrister is required to act on behalf of the council at the public inquiry.
- There are ancillary and administrative costs to consider. The CPO process involves serving statutory notices that have to appear in a local paper on separate occasions. The CPO papers need to be served on each landowner affected. When the land is vested in Wiltshire Council's ownership there will be Land Registry fees to pay and Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) payments (based on the estimated market value of the land). When the market value of the compensation is settled it may be necessary to pay further SDLT.
- Once the land has been compulsorily purchased, compensation may be payable to the former landowner and any properties affected by the scheme. The costs involved with this part of the process can vary greatly depending on the number of landowners and property owners affected by the CPO and the land involved. Further legal costs could be incurred if compensation amounts cannot be agreed and there is reference to the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber). However, compensation amounts are generally settled by agreement.
- Planning application costs.

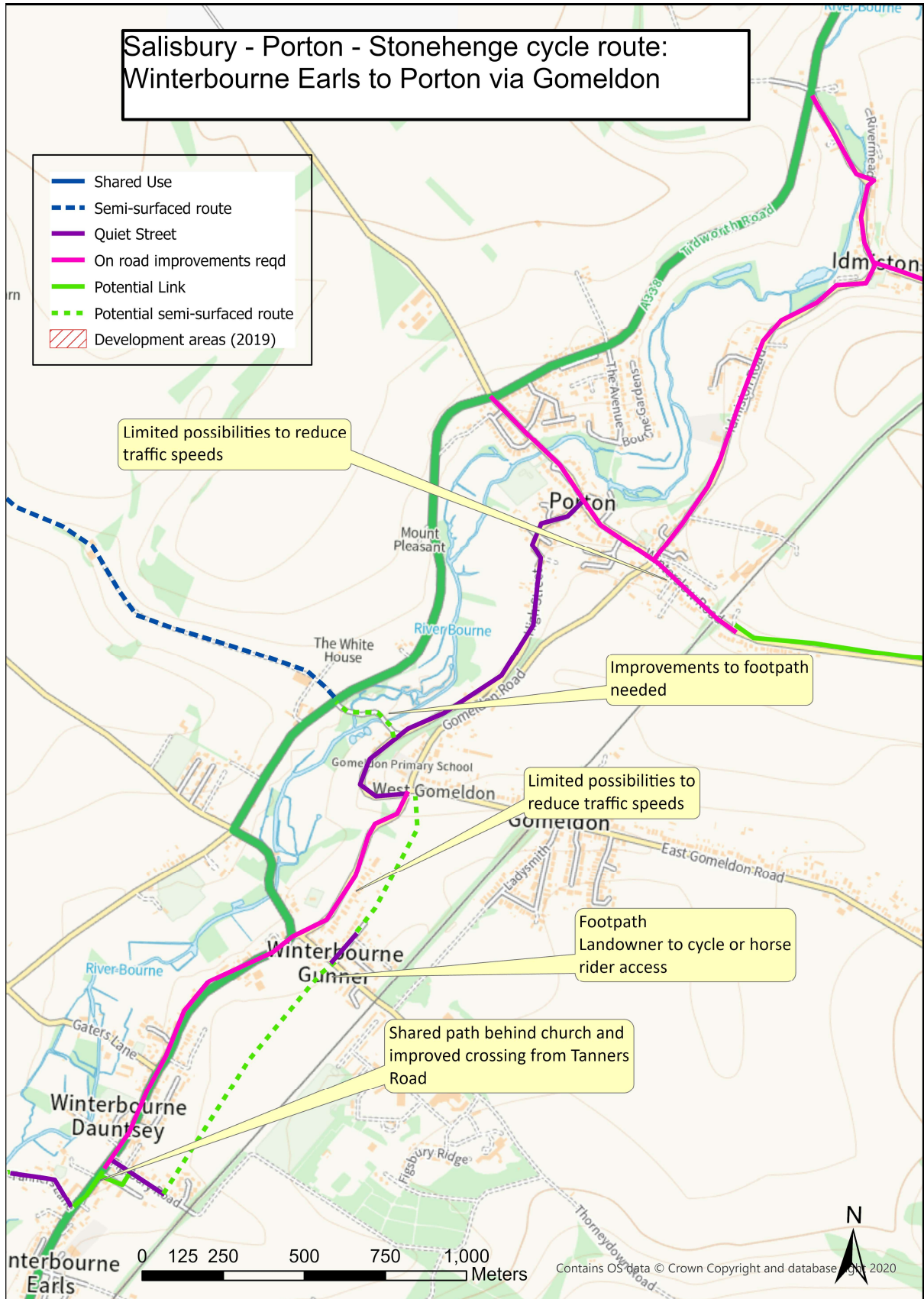
Staff resources/capacity for this scheme also need to be considered.

Appendix 1

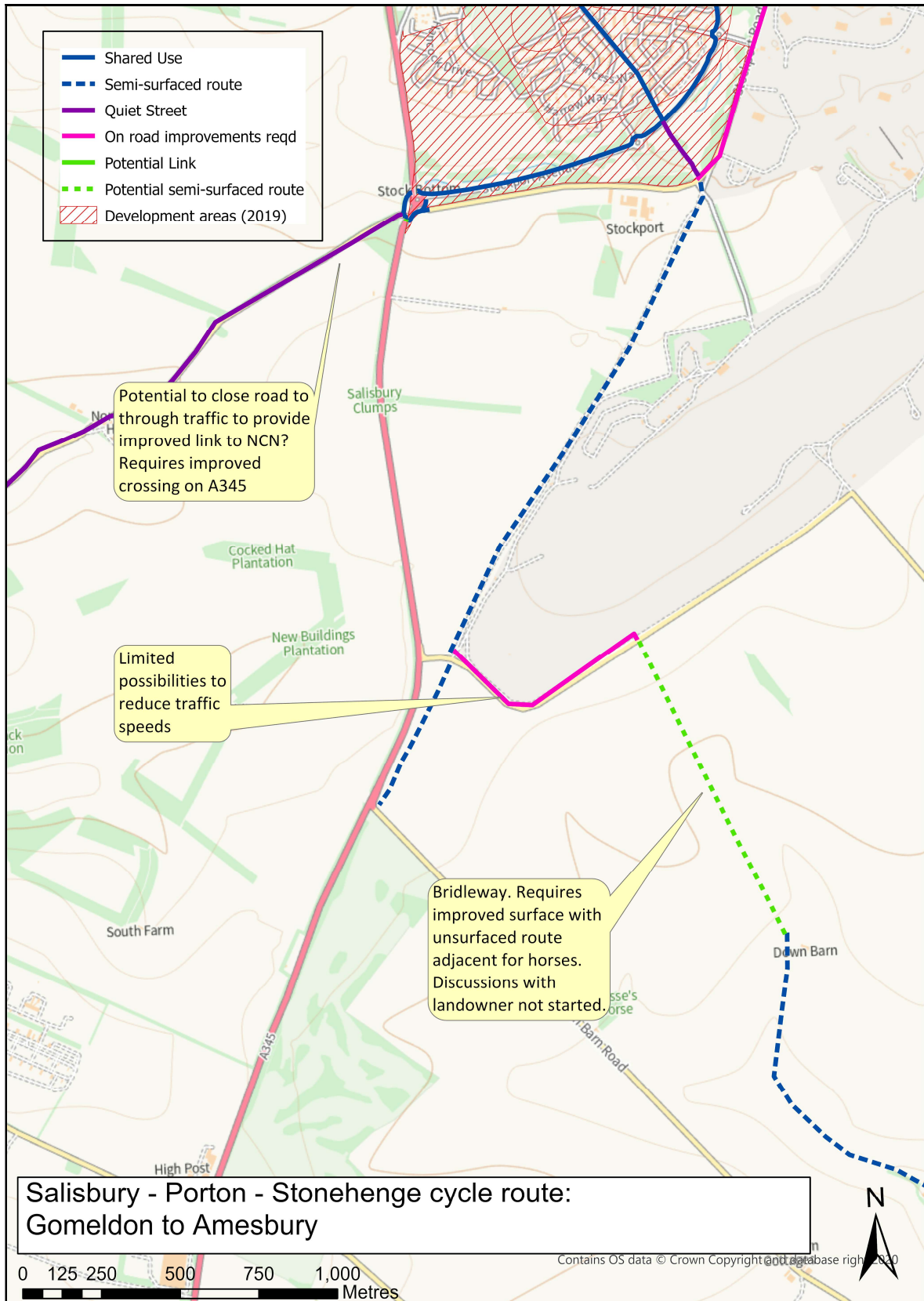
Map 1 Ford to Winterbourne Earls via Hurdcott



Map 2 Winterbourne Earls to Porton via Gomeldon



Map 3 Gomeldon to Archers Gate



Map 4 Amesbury to Stonehenge

