

A417 Vol.3

**The A417 M5 to A40 (Elmbridge Court)**  
**Archaeological Survey Stage II Assessment Report**  
**Interpretative Report**

Prepared for  
the Department of Transport

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 General**

**1.1.1** This report sets out the interpretative elements of the Stage II archaeological assessment, including the interpretation of each site evaluated during fieldwork, assessment of the archaeological implications of road construction, and recommendations for further work, based upon the detailed results of the Stage II archaeological assessment.

### **1.2 Objectives**

**1.2.1** The principal objective of the Stage II assessment was to obtain sufficient field data in order to establish the presence/absence, character, period, extent and condition of any archaeological sites or material within the proposed road corridor.

**1.2.2** On the basis of these records recommendations can then be formulated in respect of the management of the archaeological resource, and the impact of the proposed roadscheme on that resource may be assessed. These requirements constitute the substance of the following report.

## **2 THE PREFERRED ROUTE AND ITS CONTEXT**

### **2.1 The Route**

**2.1.1** The line of the proposed improvement to the A417 Elmbridge Court section extends south from the Elmbridge Court Roundabout and approaches, to a road bridge over the A417 Barnwood Bypass section which leads to Zoons Court. It is situated in a section of Greenbelt designated land on the eastern limits of the city of Gloucester.

**2.1.2** The section assessed in this report is just over 3km long. The western boundary of the survey area is defined by the limits of the A417 dual-carriageway south of the Elmbridge Court, with a small area north of the roundabout bounded by the A40 to Ross. The width of the survey area varies greatly, but generally extends between 150m and 350m east of the present roads, the variation in width accommodating various design options for new junctions. An exception is the area beside the A40 Golden Valley approach to Elmbridge Court from the M5 which extends c.1.1km east of the roundabout.

### **2.2 Archaeology and the Developed Landscape**

**2.2.1** The proposed roadline lies within the hinterland of the major Romano-British and medieval urban settlement of Gloucester. The A417, apart from various modern improvements, "is a particularly magnificent example of a Roman road still in use" (Margary 1973,134), originally called Ermin Street. The approach of Ermin Street to Gloucester can be seen less than 1km southwest of the survey area, now called

Hucclecote Road. Margary maintains that the section from Cirencester to Gloucester was a later extension of the Ermin Street, and ran to the original legionary fortress sited at Kingsholm c. 1km north of what became the Colonia, and later still the city, centre.

**2.2.2** Not surprisingly, existing archaeological evidence in the vicinity of the survey area is heavily weighted towards the Romano-British period, although Bronze Age material was found during excavations in the suburb of Barnwood (Clifford 1964); and south of the survey area as yet undated, but potentially prehistoric, cropmark evidence has been recently identified as part of the archaeological assessment of the Brockworth Bypass section of the A417 improvements (GSMR 11113; 11114; 11115).

**2.2.3** Evidence from the Romano-British period includes a cemetery (Baddeley 1920; Clifford 1930), settlement features predominantly of Romano-British date found during more recent development in Barnwood (Atkin and Garrod 1988; 1989; Rawes 1977), and recently further excavations adjacent to the site of the Hucclecote Roman Villa, all presumably located to take advantage of the access provided by Ermin Street.

**2.2.4** The medieval and post-medieval periods are marked by remains of ridge-and-furrow and a number of small farmstead-type settlements dotted around Churchdown Hill with names ending in 'Court'. There are 8 'Court-type' sites in the vicinity of the survey area. The suffix 'Court' was commonly used to denote manor houses in the Gloucester area, far more so than 'Hall' or 'Hus' (Smith 1965,192), therefore, this distribution may be an indication of the medieval manorial landscape in this part of Gloucester's hinterland.

### **3 INTERPRETATION**

#### **3.1 The Archaeological Sites (fig.1)**

**3.1.1** A total of 7 sites of potential archaeological significance were targetted for evaluation in the Stage II assessment. These sites are listed below, arranged from north to south in the survey area:

**Site I Possible cropmark at Innsworth**

**Site II Areas of possible occupation indicated by field names Stoney Lanes Piece and Stoney Lanes Piece Meadow**

**Site III Ridge-and-furrow near Elmbridge Court**

**Site IV Ridge-and-furrow near Elmbridge Court Farm, called Moat Grove**

**Site V Ridge-and-furrow near railway line**

**Site VI Area just east of excavated Romano-British Settlement in FN17**

**Site VII Artefact Cluster of Romano-British finds in ploughsoil of FN20**

## **3.2 Site Specific Discussion and Interpretation**

**3.2.1 SITE I** Evaluation confirmed that the problematic cropmark evidence did not represent any cultural activity, it is possible that marks on the aerial photograph reflect ground disturbance associated with the digging of the pipe trench through the site.

**3.2.2 SITE II** The results of the field evaluation in this area were negative. No indication consistent with human intervention other than pastoral landuse was found, with the exception of an area where some wartime ground disturbance seems to have occurred. It seems probable that the field name evidence of 'Stoney Lanes Piece' and 'Stoney Lanes Piece Meadow' was related to a nearby stoney track or roadway rather than to the fields.

**3.2.3 SITE III** While the ridge-and-furrow was detected by the geophysical survey, the only other possible archaeological features identified were two faint pit-like anomalies. However, given the proximity of the possible pits to the Elmbridge Court roundabout the likelihood is that these pits were associated with the construction of the roundabout.

**3.2.4 SITE IV** While magnetic disturbance from a telegraph pole and a large steel-sheeting-clad barn affected readings in the western part of the survey area, the geophysical survey results did not indicate the presence of archaeological features beneath the ridge-and-furrow. No indication of a second moated enclosure was found, as might have been indicated by the field name 'Moat Grove'.

**3.2.5 SITE V** Again the data was dominated by a pipe running through the north of the survey area. The ridge-and-furrow was detectable as a northwest/southeast trend. Only one anomaly of possible archaeological interest was found, however, the level of disturbance associated with this anomaly indicated that a modern or natural origin was equally likely.

**3.2.6 SITE VI** The results from both geophysical survey and trial trenching in enclosure FN17 indicate that any survival of archaeological deposits relating to the known Romano-British settlement excavated to the west of the A417 is likely to be at best patchy and ill-defined because of extensive ground disturbance and problems of feature/deposit recognition.

**3.2.7 SITE VII** Excavation was unable to resolve the question of the origin of the artefact scatter. There are two possible explanations, firstly, that the artefacts arrived in the field as a result of agricultural practices such as manuring in the Roman period, and thereafter have tended through geomorphological processes and ploughing to cluster in this particular area of the field; alternatively, the cluster may reflect some form of settlement located further upslope, from which the artefacts have migrated through the same processes mentioned above. If the latter were the case then the site would probably lie on the very periphery, or even outside, the survey area.

### **3.2.8 Conclusions**

Detailed evaluation of the potential archaeological sites identified in the Stage I report together with the artefact scatter discovered during fieldwork in Stage II, has established that the majority of potential sites cannot be correlated with any tangible archaeological remains, including buried deposits, earthworks, or upstanding remains. Sites I,II,III,IV, and V, can be ascribed to this category, which at most may be assessed to be of local importance. Sites VI and VII were potentially of higher,

regional, status, reflecting a potential group value with other known Romano-British sites in the vicinity of Ermin Street. However, in the case of Site VI the degree of disturbance to any presumed archaeological deposits, together with the likelihood that the area threatened by the proposed road corridor was in fact on the very periphery, or even outside of, the known archaeological site **GSMR 6731**, implies that at best the site defined in the Stage II survey can be ascribed an 'uncertain' status. Site VII is problematic because no firm conclusions could be drawn from the data collected in the Stage II assessment as to the origin of the artefact scatter, however, it is probable that any site lies outside the survey area.

## **4 ASSESSMENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION**

### **4.1 Discussion**

**4.1.1** The interpretation of the results of the Stage II archaeological assessment given below are summarised and discussed with reference to Section 3 Part 2 of the **Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11: Environmental Assessment** published by the Department of Transport in 1993 (hereafter referred to as DMRB 11), and the **Institute of Field Archaeologists Occasional Paper Number 5: Environmental Assessment and Archaeology** (eds. Ralston and Thomas 1993).

**4.1.2** On those sites assessed as part of Stage II it has been demonstrated that it is unlikely that Sites I and II can be correlated with any tangible archaeological features, therefore an assessment of the impact of the roadscheme upon these 'sites' may be categorised as at most negligible, and the category of site at best uncertain.

**4.1.3** The most tangible archaeological features of Sites III, IV, and V are the surface indications of ridge-and-furrow. Stage II evaluation has demonstrated that the possibility of the ridge-and-furrow masking earlier archaeological deposits is remote. The severity of the impact of the roadscheme upon the archaeological resource in this instance can be assessed as being of minor effect, as the bulk of the ridge-and-furrow should remain unaffected by the roadscheme, and is of no more than local importance.

**4.1.4** Site VI is judged to be on the periphery of the known site GSMR 6731. Evaluation in Stage II appears to indicate that any archaeological remains in this area may be expected to be so badly damaged that too little now remains to justify their inclusion in a higher grade of site. The category of risk of the development on the site is uncertain, although the severity of impact upon the site may be expected to be of a minor order.

**4.1.4** Site VII is more problematic given the inconclusive results from the Stage II evaluation, however, the evidence from the Stage II evaluation appears to indicate that any potential site is located outside the survey area, and therefore is not threatened by the proposed roadscheme.

**4.1.5** In general terms the impact of the proposed roadscheme upon the historic landscape of the proposed road corridor may be categorised as being of a negligible to minor order. The landscape directly threatened by the roadscheme possess little intrinsic historical value, while those landscape features identified during the Stage II landscape survey near Pirton Court are located on the very periphery of the survey area, and are, as such, unlikely to be adversely affected by the roadscheme. However, no potential benefits upon the archaeological resource could be quantified as a result of the proposed roadscheme

#### **4.2 Non Assessed Impact**

While in general the archaeological potential of the development area has been categorised as low, whatever the level of assessment undertaken for a scheme of this type, and given the nature of archaeological remains and their survival, it must always be recognised that some potential for unrecognised archaeological resources will remain. In these circumstances it is advisable to envisage that some remains of archaeological significance will only come to light during the course of earthmoving operations within the road construction programme

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1** Following the presentation of data from the Stage I and Stage II assessments recommendations relating to a Stage III response are offered.

#### **5.2 Site Specific Recommendations**

No site specific recommendations are offered as part of a Stage III response, given the results of the Stage II assessment

#### **5.3 General Recommendations**

**5.3.1** An archaeological watching brief should be maintained throughout the road corridor during the initial stages of earthmoving.

This recommendation may provide significant supplementary information on new archaeological sites where previous assessment failed to locate any remains

**5.3.2** Care should be taken with the location of access points, storage areas or other activities subsidiary to the road corridor, especially in those areas of visible archaeological remains including the areas of ridge-and-furrow, or where known sites lie just outside the corridor.