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Glos 13972
S0803112

M5 Junction 12 Improvements, Archaeological Evaluation

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1 Summary

In October 1992 the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council undertook an evaluation of land at NGR SO 803112 located c. 1km west of Haresfield, Gloucestershire. The area was examined by the excavation of seven trial trenches. No significant archaeological deposits were located during the evaluation, and no further archaeological assessment or recording is recommended.

2 Introduction

2.1 In October 1992 the Archaeology Section of Gloucestershire County Council undertook an evaluation of land at NGR SO 803112 located 1km west of Haresfield, Gloucestershire (fig 1). The site was geologically located on the lower lias clay. The work was commissioned by Gloucestershire Design, the consultancy branch of the County Surveyor's Department, as part of an overall environmental assessment of the impact of improvements to M5 Junction 12.

2.2 Description of the evaluation area

The evaluation site is divided into two main areas, located to the north-east and south-east of the existing southbound motorway access.

The northern area lies within OS land parcel 3633, it is bounded to the north by a small stream and to the south by the existing motorway and access road. The area is to be used for a new northbound access road onto the motorway. Two trenches were dug along the centre line of the proposed road. At the time of the evaluation the land was under pasture.

The southern area lies within parts of OS land parcels 3100, 5527 and 5700. The area is bounded to the west by the B4008, to the south by a road running west from Haresfield, and to the north by the M5 and the existing access road. The area is to be used for a new southbound exit road from the motorway, and modifications to the road running from Haresfield to the B4008, with a roundabout to be located at the western end of the site. The motorway exit road and embankment will form a strip 10m - 26m in width, running south-west for c. 230m across the site. Four trenches were located along the centre line of the motorway exit road, a fifth was orientated east-west on the site of the proposed roundabout and embankment. At the time of the evaluation the land had recently been put down to pasture.

2.3 Archaeological background

The Gloucestershire County Sites and Monuments Record records no sites of archaeological interest within the evaluation area.

Recorded archaeological sites in the vicinity include a scatter of Roman pottery and a stone mortar which were recovered c. 160m to the north west of the site in 1969 during fieldwalking undertaken by Gloucester and District Archaeological Research Group: finds are in Gloucester Museum. These finds indicate a probable area of Roman occupation somewhere in the vicinity, although its precise location and extent are not known. Structural evidence for this occupation was not forthcoming during the construction of the M5 motorway in the 1970s (Fowler *et al* 1976, 50; Fowler 1977) (County Sites and Monuments Record no. Glos 4422, NGR SO 802115).

To the north east of the site a cropmark complex can be seen on aerial photographs. The nature and date of the complex, which is comprised of parallel linear features with adjoining enclosures, is uncertain (Glos 4421, SO 806118).

A circular cropmark, interpretable as an enclosure covering c. 0.2 hectares is visible on an aerial photograph c. 144m to the east of evaluation Trench 7. The nature and date of the complex is uncertain (Glos 4149, SO 80651094).

A scatter of post-medieval pottery dating to the 16th-18th centuries, was observed during field survey in the 1960s. ~~The significance of the finds is uncertain, but they may indicate the location of a house alongside the B4008 road (Glos 7089, SO 801111).~~

A more complete survey of the known archaeology of the area has been carried out as part of an assessment of the land located to the north east of the evaluation (Parry 1992).

3 The Evaluation

3.1 The objective of the evaluation was to sample the area of proposed development to determine whether significant archaeological deposits were present. Seven trenches 1m wide were excavated, the two trenches in the northern area were c. 20m in length, the five in the southern area were c. 30m in length. A combined total area of c. 190 square metres was uncovered. The work was undertaken during the period 26.10.92 - 30.10.1992. The trenches were excavated using a machine excavator equipped with a toothless bucket to remove topsoils and cultivated soils to expose the uppermost surface of the natural subsoil. The trench sections and subsoil surfaces were then cleaned by hand, one section of each trench was drawn, and the visible deposits were recorded.

3.2 In the northern part of the site, the modern topsoil varied in thickness from 0.1m-0.4m. In the eastern part of Trench 1, nearest to the motorway, the topsoil overlay redeposited lias clay which contained road chippings and tarmac fragments, which suggests that the area was used for spoil dumping during the initial construction of the motorway. The in situ lias clay was overlain either by this layer or by topsoil. No features of archaeological significance were seen.

3.3 In the southern area, the topsoil was of similar thickness to that in the northern area, but contained a higher proportion of clay. The subsoil in Trench 7 consisted of a mixture of clay and gravel, elsewhere the subsoil was blue lias clay. The only feature seen on the site was a ditch which ran north-south across Trench 7, the feature cut into the lias clay, and was sealed by the modern topsoil. No finds were retrieved from the feature, but as the line of the ditch was identical to that of the removed boundary between OS land parcels 5527 and 5700, it was not thought to be of great archaeological significance. In all other areas excavated, the topsoil lay on top of the clay subsoil.

4 Discussion

No evidence for the presence of significant archaeology was detected during the evaluation. A cultivated soil represents the only man-made deposit on the site. Finds from the soil were exclusively of post medieval date, mostly of the 19th and 20th centuries.

5 Recommendation

5.1 In view of the absence of evidence for archaeological deposits within the proposed area of development, it is recommended that no further archaeological work is undertaken before, or during, construction.

6 References

- Fowler, P. 1976 Archaeology and the M5 motorway:
et al fourth report. TBGAS 94, 47-91
- Fowler, P. 1977 Archaeology and the M5 motorway,
Gloucestershire 1969-75: a summary
and assessment. TBGAS 95, 40-46
- Parry, C. 1992 NW Quadrant, M5 Junction 12
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Assessment. Gloucestershire
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7 Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the landowner, Mr. Heywood of Chestnut Farm, Haresfield for allowing access to the site.

