

BATTLEFIELDS TRUST PRESS RELEASE



EAGLE DRIVE SPORTS FIELD DECISION CONDEMNED BY BATTLEFIELDS TRUST

The Battlefields Trust says that Northampton Borough Council's decision to approve the principle of allowing sports pitches on land at Eagle Drive Delapre without a full archaeological survey may destroy nationally important heritage,.

Battlefield Trust Chairman, Frank Baldwin, said:

“English Heritage has registered the Wars of the Roses battlefield at Northampton because of its significance both politically and militarily. But now Northampton Borough Council wants to turn part of it into sports fields “.

“This will be more than painting a few white lines on the grass and will involve levelling and grading, stripping turf, constructing changing facilities, walkways and, no doubt, a car park”.

Northampton is one of 43 battlefields in England that are deemed by English Heritage to be of national importance. It appeared on English Heritage's 'Heritage at Risk' register up until 2008 and the Council proposal could put it back into the 'under threat' category. The Battlefields Trust is concerned that the Council seems not to understand the battlefield as a heritage asset.

Frank Baldwin added:

“The Council's decision last week did not take account of the fact that fragile archaeology may exist at the site which could tell us precisely where and how the battle was fought. Northampton battlefield has the potential to reveal as much about medieval warfare as recent archaeological work at Bosworth, where a full HLF-funded survey found the battlefield there.”

“Northampton has plenty of locations where sports fields could be built and wrecking local heritage at Eagle Drive is too high a price to pay. The Battlefields Trust will seek English Heritage support in opposing any planning permission that does not take account of the archaeology or impact of development on the setting of the battlefield”

The Council has recently won £250,000 of Heritage Lottery funding to develop a larger bid for the renovation of the Delapre Abbey and surrounding area. This work will need to tell the story of the battle of Northampton, though the Council's plans for Eagle Drive now seem to put its ability to do this at risk. Nevertheless the Battlefields Trust remains committed to working with the Council to raise the profile of the battlefield.

Local Battlefield Trust representative Mike Ingram commented:

“The project at Delapre has the potential to realise the great tourist and educational asset that the battlefield provides for Northampton and we are keen to work with the Council and other stakeholders to this end.”

Background

The Battlefield Trust is a national charity that aims to protect, promote and interpret battlefields as educational and historical resources. It was set up in 1992 in response to the A14 road threat to the English Civil War battlefield at Naseby. It has successfully opposed development on other Wars of the Roses battlefields at Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and Blore Heath in Staffordshire

The battle at Northampton is significant politically, militarily and archaeologically. After it, the Duke of York pressed his dynastic claim to the throne for the first time, ushering a new and bloodier phase of the civil war. The battle featured a unique assault on a fortified camp and the probable use of artillery there makes it an important element in the story of the development of firepower; evidence of early use of artillery would be a valuable a comparator to the recent finds at Bosworth.

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