



Registered UK Charity: 1017387
Company No: 2786730

Borough Secretary and Monitoring Officer
Northampton Borough Council
The Guildhall
St. Giles Square
Northampton NN1 1DE

12 October 2012

Your Ref: MW/SR/OAP/00614

INTENT TO DISPOSE OF LAND AT EAGLE DRIVE, DELAPRE

I am the Chairman of the Mercia Region of the Battlefields Trust, a national charity dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of battlefields as a historical and educational resource (see www.battlefieldstrust.com), and am writing to you in connection with the proposal to dispose of land at Eagle Drive, Delapre for sports purposes.

As I am sure you are aware, the land at Eagle Drive sits within the English Heritage registered area of the Northampton (1460) battlefield. Northampton is one of 43 battlefields in England that are deemed to be of national importance. The battle at Northampton is significant politically, militarily and archaeologically. After it, the Duke of York for the first time pressed his dynastic claim to the throne and by so doing ushered in a new and bloodier phase of the civil war. The battle also featured an assault on a fortified camp, protected by entrenchments and artillery. Whilst the use of fortified camps was common in continental warfare at the time and the Duke of York had dug his army in at Crayford in 1452 and Ludford Bridge in 1459, Northampton was the only occasion during the Wars of the Roses that entrenchments were actually attacked. The probable use of artillery at Northampton also makes it important as part of the story of the development of firepower; evidence of early use of artillery would be important as a comparator to the finds at Bosworth (1485).

The disposal and the proposed change of use of land at Eagle Drive will have a significant detrimental effect on the character of the registered battlefield and could destroy crucial stratified and unstratified archaeology that will be central to demonstrating exactly where the action was fought, improve our

Registered Office:
Edmund House
233 Edmund Road
Sheffield
S2 4EL

National Co-ordinator:
60 Seymour Road
St Albans
Hertfordshire
AL3 5HW

Membership Secretary:
47 Queens Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3EW

appreciation of the battle and contribute to the wider understanding of the development of warfare in the period.

The proposed disposal and change in use would inevitably involve the stripping of earth to provide new playing surfaces, installation of fencing, parking facilities and pathways and the construction of changing facilities. All would jeopardise any surviving battlefield archaeology, most of which, by its unstratified nature, tends to be fragile and found in the top soil. New construction and ground levelling would be detrimental to the character of the battlefield, making it more difficult to appreciate terrain features and visualise the action whilst also interfering with sight lines. In the Trust's view this would constitute substantial harm to the battlefield as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.

From a response to an EIR request made by the Trust to Northampton Borough Council it appears that these factors were not considered or put before the Council in advance of its decision in principle to dispose of the land on 11 July 2012. This suggests that due process was not correctly followed and Council members made a decision without being aware of all of the facts. At the very least Council members should have the opportunity to reconsider their 11 July decision with these facts before them, including English Heritage's recent call for a thorough study of the battlefield before any decisions, including on disposal, are taken in respect of the land at Eagle Drive (see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/working-locally/east-midlands/highlights/>). The Battlefields Trust similarly calls on the Council to undertake a detailed survey of the whole battlefield in advance of any decision relating to possible disposal of land and development on the battlefield.

For these reasons the Battlefields Trust strongly opposes the plans to dispose of land at Eagle Drive.

Simon Marsh
Chair Mercia Branch
Battlefields Trust