

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Battlefields Trust (see [www.battlefieldstrust.com](http://www.battlefieldstrust.com)), a national charity dedicated to the preservation, interpretation and presentation of battlefields as educational and historical resources. I understand you are a member of Selby District Council's Planning Committee and on 8 January 2014 will be deciding on an application to make permanent the temporary permission to have two caravans sited on 'The Gallops' at Towton (2012/0979/FUL ) and it is in respect of this application that I write.

The Trust has read the Planning Department's report on this application with care. As you might imagine, it disagrees strongly with the conclusion of the report and offers the following observations which do not seem to have been covered in earlier correspondence with others.

Quite rightly the report attempts to balance the wider public benefit of non-development of 'The Gallops' site against the rights of the applicant under law. As far as the registered battlefield is concerned it follows the Inspectors view that this application does not impinge on the battlefield. Whilst we could argue about the merits of this opinion, what it fails to take account of is both the precedent set by any decision in favour of development on the margins of a registered battlefield and what the cumulative effect of this might be over time. How many 'The Gallops' type developments running up to the registered battlefield would be acceptable to Selby District Council at Towton?

Secondly, whilst the report as it stands may set out a compliant position with the local plan, the Trust would argue it is not within the spirit of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF is clear in para 131 that:

In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

This is further amplified by the Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide which, as I am sure you are aware, remains a material consideration in planning and heritage consent decisions within or in close proximity to, amongst other things, a registered battlefield.

It seems to the Trust that these aspects have not been given sufficient weight in the report, particularly as the Inspector has already acknowledged that 'The Gallops' constitutes a likely line of retreat or rout for the Lancastrian army. If this is correct then, under English Heritage's May 2012 designation guidance (see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/designations/dsg-battlefields/battlefields-sag.pdf> ) the area of 'The Gallops' it does represent part of the heritage resource which is the battlefield, albeit that the extension to the registration has not yet caught up

with this. The Trust understands that this is in part because of the time taken by English Heritage to consult properly on the registration extension and it seems unfortunate that planning and heritage designation timetables being misaligned should be allowed to cause detriment to heritage assets.

After Hastings, Bosworth and Naseby, Towton is arguably the most important battle on English soil. The local community and the Towton Battlefield Society have developed the site into an important amenity and visitors come from around the world to see where history was made. Selby District Council has part of the responsibility for ensuring the site can educate and be appreciated by future generations. The Trust would therefore ask that you consider the above points and make the right decision by rejecting this planning application.

Yours faithfully

Simon Marsh

Battlefields Trust Research Officer