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Planning Department
Northampton Borough Council

10 November 2012

**PLANNING APPLICATION N/2012/1065 DELAPRE GOLF COMPLEX
EAGLE DRIVE NORTHAMPTON EXTENSION OF CAR PARK**

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 above planning application on which you requested comment.

As I am sure you are aware, the proposed area of development 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 detrimental effect on the character of the registered battlefield and could destroy crucial unstratified archaeology that will be central to demonstrating exactly where the action was fought, improve our appreciation of the battle and contribute to the wider understanding of the development of warfare in the period.

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The proposed disposal and change in use would inevitably involve the stripping of earth to create suitable foundations for the car park. This would jeopardise any surviving battlefield archaeology, most of which, by its unstratified nature, tends to be fragile and found in the top soil. Such construction would be detrimental to the character of the battlefield, making its appreciation more difficult and further degrade the battlefield setting. In the Trust's view this would constitute substantial harm to the battlefield as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Earlier developments on the site were carried out before the English Heritage Battlefield Register were formed, and the fact these took place does not qualify the current proposal as a "wholly exceptional" justification within NPPF. The battlefield's setting within the registered area is protected for the purpose of preserving important heritage and the Trust strongly objects on these grounds also.

I also have some more general points to make. Firstly I find it odd that the Northampton Borough Council planning application form does not ask about whether the proposed development is likely to affect scheduled monuments, though it does ask about sites of special scientific interest, protected and priority species and geological conservation. I'd be grateful if you could clarify this omission as it would lead a casual observer to conclude that Northampton Borough Council has no regard for its heritage, which I am sure is not the case.

Secondly the design and access statement makes an assertion that at peak times the car park reaches capacity and suggests that planned developments at the Golf Club will increase demand for parking. The Golf Club has provided no evidence of this in the form of, for example, a detailed log of car parking usage or projections for future use of proposed new facilities based on member surveys. Given the threat the proposed development poses to a nationally important, designated battlefield I would have expected the quality of evidence to be higher and suggest that without this application should be rejected. I should also add that the Battlefields Trust would oppose the development of an 'adventure golf' facility at the club if this involved movement of earth on the registered battlefield as explained above.

For the reasons outlined above the Battlefields Trust strongly opposes the plans to extend the car park at Delapre Golf club.

Simon Marsh
Chair Mercia Branch
Battlefields Trust