

Appendix 3

Battlefield Impact – Fact or Assertion?

A Response to the Battlefield Trust and Richard III Society comments

Facts

- The 2014 extension to the Battlefield boundary encroached into land within MIRA ownership. The intention for this extension was to provide a buffer to southern extent of the battlefield as it was unclear where the actual limits were.
- The proposals will affect 0.56% of the extended registered Bosworth Battlefield
- This part of the battlefield already falls within the MIRA employment site as designated within the Hinckley & Bosworth Site Allocations Plan.
- This is not therefore a new conflict and in all the MIRA applications around the site, a large amount of archaeological work is undertaken to mitigate development proposals.
- In this case, the University of Leicester (working in accordance with specifications agreed with Leicestershire County Council and Historic England) has produced over 10 pieces of work, including desk based assessment, geophysical surveys, earthwork survey, trial trenching, fieldwalking, metal detecting, and an assessment of battlefield setting.
- This work has enabled the advisors to the planning authority to conclude that the development would have limited harm to the battlefield both in terms of the buried archaeological potential and the land form setting. Historic England confirms:

The proposed development site is to the south west with just a small strip being in the registered battlefield. It is therefore located on the edge of the most important areas and will have no physical impact on the key parts of the battle, such as the Royalist encampment, Henry's approach and the battle itself. The testing track and associated landscaping will be visible from certain points within the battlefield, but not in views to, from and between the key parts of the battle.

- Leicestershire County Council recommended approval of the scheme and advised that developers are required to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact of development. In addressing this requirement, it is being proposed that virtual 3D computer modelling of the battlefield and its surrounding area (to be gifted to the Battlefield Visitors Centre) be undertaken, and this would be a benefit resulting from the proposals that may not otherwise be realised. We consider this modelling to be a tangible educational and heritage benefit and is something in which MIRA has experience in creating.
- The Battlefield Trust contend that the discovery of further battlefield archaeology in the form of a round shot from the battle raises the possibility of further important archaeology from the battle across the proposed development site being found. Professor Glenn Foard (preeminent expert on the battlefield) interprets the single roundshot as overshot that will have come to rest several hundred metres behind the position of the troops at which they were fired.
- Subsequent surveys since the discovery of the round shot has found no other unequivocal evidence of the battle. However, the potential is recognised which is why post determination surveys will be undertaken. This level of investigation would not be possible without the development and therefore the possibility would simply remain unknown.

Assertions Only

1. The Battlefield Trust state the proposed development sits in the vicinity of the crest over which the Fenn Lane approaches the battlefield and it is almost certainly where the rebel army first saw the royal army's deployment – and if the development goes ahead, it would have a serious impact on this important feature.

This is assertion not supported by evidence. In fact the only evidence available on setting has been produced by the University of Leicester. Henry's approach to the battlefield is not definitively known with approaches from the south-west and alternatively the south, well to the east of the proposed site suggested by Foard. The current view from the ridge/crest toward the centre of the battlefield is much obscured by vegetation (Ashpole Spinney, Rowden Gorse, Lindley Wood), with only glimpses of the application site and the centre of the Registered Battlefield visible.

Longer distance views across the Battlefield beyond the application site are available and will be unaffected. The harm to the existing views and setting of the battlefield is therefore low.

2. The Battlefield Trust is concerned that marginal development such as this proposal risks the incremental destruction of the battlefield at Bosworth, as the Council will find these hard to reject given the precedent this case establishes, especially if such applications are small scale.

It is for the council to treat each application on its merits so precedent is unlikely to be set. There are very special circumstances associated with these proposals (such as the significant economic benefits) that are unlikely to be represented in other proposals in the battlefield.

3. The Battlefield Trust also questions whether the full economic impact of the development has correctly been assessed claiming that there would be a negative impact on battlefield tourism.

There is no evidence to suggest the proposals would have a negative effect on visitors to the battlefield. The development does not interfere with views from the Visitors Centre or can be viewed from any key public vantage points or footpaths. LCC as managers of the Battlefield Visitors Centre do not consider the proposals would affect tourism to the battlefield. If the results of a visualisation project were integrated into a visitor's experience at the Ambion Hill visitor centre it would be a significant asset which would increase the attractiveness to visitors as well as the wider public through a web-based format.

4. It has been contended that it is possible to stand where Henry Tudor stood when he first saw Richards III's army, ponder the decisions he then made and from there to walk the footsteps to the point where the armies engaged; and that the proposals would prevent this.

This is a misleading statement. First, as stated above there is no certainty about the movements of Henry Tudor, only speculation and hypothesis. The western ridge is not identified or even discussed as having any importance in the 2013 book "A battlefield rediscovered", nor is "The Mount" mentioned. Second, even in the event Henry Tudor did amass his troops at the Mount and walk along Fenn Lanes towards battle, it would not be possible to 'walk these footsteps' given current landownership constraints and landscape features such as Ashpole Spinney. The only evidence available to map the scene of the battle is the round shot finds and these show the battle is likely to have taken place much further north than the application site – see image following.

5. The Battlefield Trust has released various Statements in support of their campaign that claim that proposals will lead to significant destruction and harm.

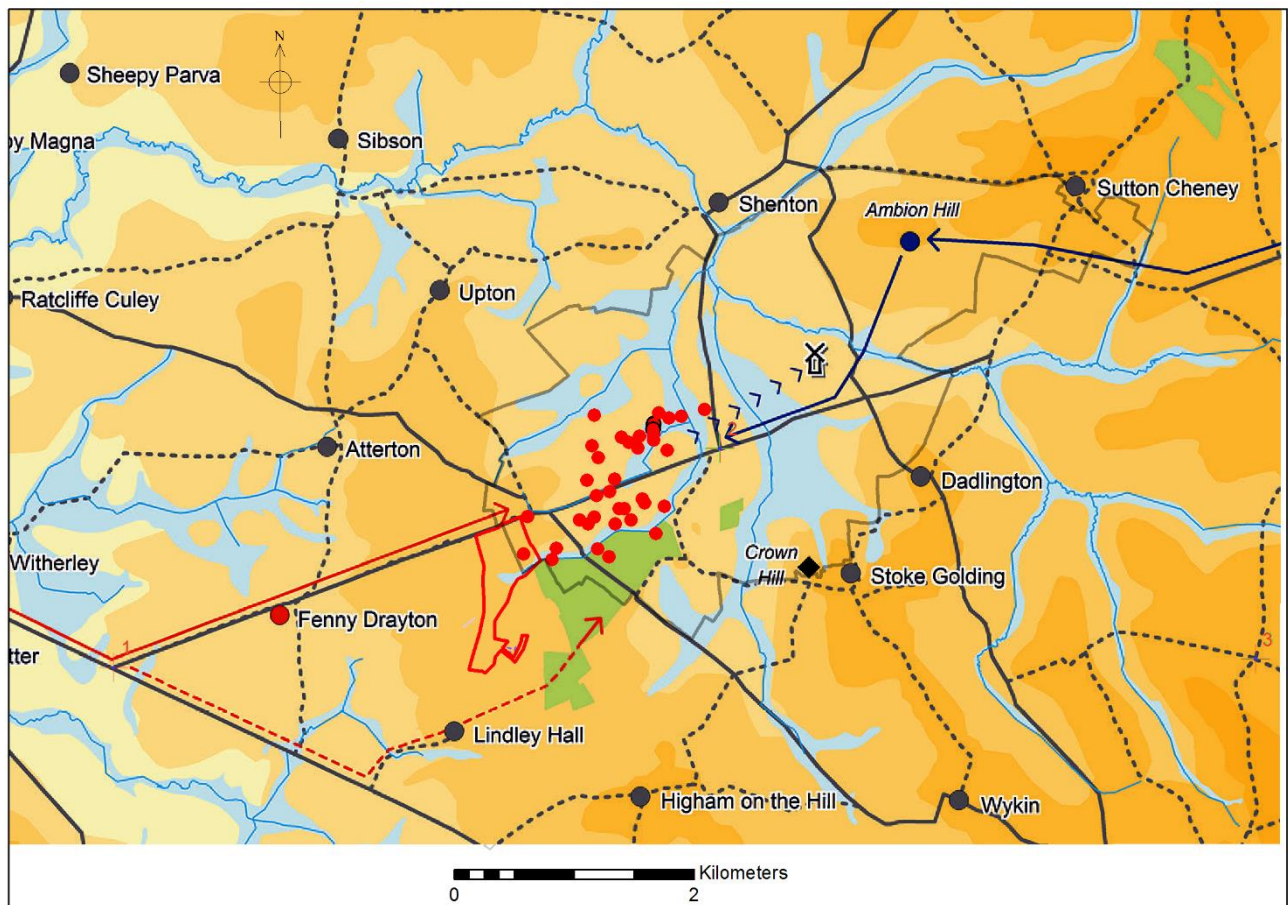
We respectfully suggest that these statements are not as informed as the stakeholders involved in this application process, namely Historic England and Leicestershire County Council, who have had the benefit of reviewing all of the archaeological work undertaken.

Conclusion

The existing landscape is very different from the open field landscape of the late medieval period when the battle took place. The enclosure of the landscape makes it difficult to appreciate the battle as most views are broken and the landscape is limited in its variation.

This is why there is significant benefit for 3d visualisation of the battlefield and its environs (at that time) using detailed topographic data as a back drop for layers of information on the historic development of the area. This could enable a much wider appreciation of the battle and enable the appreciation of views that are not currently possible/accessible.

The mitigation for the impact on the loss of any finds buried within the soils of the site will also include a series of further investigations including resurveys of previously detected areas to ensure as far as possible the recording of the artefactual evidence from the battle of Bosworth and also from the Civil War skirmish known to have occurred here. This data will provide further hard evidence on which new theories and hypotheses regarding these significant historic events can be based and would otherwise not be available.



Plan showing Henry Tudor's possible route to the battle (red lines) and the areas of round shot discovery (red dots) including those found in 2017 and 2018 (after Foard & Curry 2013, p180).

Foard, G. and Curry A., 2013. Bosworth 1485. A Battlefield Rediscovered. Oxbow Books.