

West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (adopted June 2025)

Policy DM13

Registered Battlefields

Proposals for development that could affect the Registered Battlefield(s) in Newbury will be required to be sensitively designed and clearly demonstrate that great weight has been given to the conservation and significance of the asset and its setting in accordance with policy SP9. Particular regard will be given to the following criteria:

- a. Its historic open character and appearance;
- b. The topographical integrity of the landscape;
- c. Any disturbance which could harm its archaeological potential;
- d. The prevention of the sub-division of the landscape;
- e. The cumulative impact of successive small scale changes;
- f. The conservation of both human-made and natural features of archaeological and historic interest within it and the requirement to record such features and deposit the evidence with the Historic Environment Record;
- g. Minimising the impacts from development in its rural setting and along the urban edge of Newbury by ensuring the design is appropriate and sympathetic to its setting in terms of height, massing, density, materials and night and day visibility;
- h. The provision of new landscape planting where appropriate to maintain and enhance the level of screening/filtering of built development especially on the urban edge of Newbury from views within and surrounding the Registered Battlefield; and
- i. The enhancement of existing public access and interpretative opportunities.

Proposals for development in previously undisturbed areas within the Registered Battlefield and its setting should be subject to appropriate archaeological assessment.

Supporting Text

10.113 The purpose of this policy is to set out more detailed criteria for development proposals affecting Registered Battlefields.

10.114 Since 1995 Historic England has compiled a Register of Historic Battlefields, designated because of their special historic interest; they are designated heritage assets of the highest significance. Inclusion on the Register does not provide statutory protection, however, the historic and archaeological interest of a battlefield is a material planning consideration when determining planning applications within or adjoining Registered Battlefields. Furthermore the NPPF makes it clear that substantial harm to or loss to Registered Battlefields should be wholly exceptional.

10.115 To be included on the Register, sites must be securely established and still recognisable today. In 2023 there is one Registered Battlefield in West Berkshire, the First Battle of Newbury in 1643. It is a unique heritage asset in West Berkshire. It has been affected by past development and it is reasonable to expect that these development pressures will continue due to its close proximity to the built edge of Newbury and the significant amount of potential development land in its setting.

10.116 The First Battle of Newbury is important because it represented probably the best chance Charles I ever had of winning the Civil War. The battle was fought south of the River Kennet over terrain which rises gradually to a narrow plateau a mile long before falling away again towards the River Enborne. The battlefield area boundary defines the outer reasonable limit of the battle and has been drawn so that it is easily appreciated on the ground. Despite the removal of boundaries of many small fields on land to the north of the battlefield area, there is still topographic integrity to Newbury 1643, which allows the landscape context to be understood. The site also forms valuable open space to the west of Newbury.

10.117 Newbury was also the site of a second Civil War conflict in 1644, to the north of the town, the Second Battle of Newbury. This was also a significant engagement where Parliamentary failure to triumph led to the creation of the New Model Army. Much more of this battlefield has been urbanised and is not a designated heritage asset. It is however listed in the Appendix of the Register of Historic Battlefields and it still contains areas of open space that allow for a degree of understanding of the battle's terrain. As a non-designated heritage asset the site of the Second Battle of Newbury 1644 will therefore be considered under policy DM11.

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10.118 Newbury is unique in being the location of two Civil War battles, and for both sites there is the potential for interpretation and presentation. Furthermore, the archaeological potential of both battlefields has not been fully explored. The application of methodical survey techniques executed to professional standards offers the potential for major advances in the understanding of battle sites. It is likely however that past episodes of unsystematic and poorly recorded metal-detecting may have removed some evidence over the areas of conflict at Newbury. The creation of local Finds Liaison Officers under the Portable Antiquities Scheme has done much to improve the reporting of archaeological discoveries, and opportunities should be taken to advance understanding of the battles in a sustainable way. Despite the armies' losses, there are very few known contemporary graves.

10.119 The Council will consult Historic England on applications for development likely to affect a Registered Battlefield. Consideration will also be given to consulting the Battlefields Trust.