

Battlefields as Assets of Community Value (ACVs) (text only)

by Peter Burley

The information here is derived from the 'My Community' at

<https://mycommunity.org.uk/what-are-assets-of-community-value-acv>

The advice here has been prompted by the successful inclusion by a local amenity society of part of the Wars of the Roses battlefield of the second battle of St Albans (1461) on its local authority's register of Assets of Community Value (Acvs).

Assets of Community Value are designated by regulations made under the Localism Act 2012. They form a part of the 'Community Right to Bid'. They act as the first stage in identifying and nominating buildings or other assets, such as land, that have a main use or purpose of furthering the social well-being or social interests of the local community, and could do so into the future. Once listed as an ACV with the local authority, the local community will be informed if they are listed for sale within the five year listing period. The community can then enact the Community Right to Bid, which gives them a moratorium period of six months to determine if they can raise the finance to purchase the asset.

An Asset of Community Value is defined as:

A building or other land is an asset of community value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social well-being or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future. The Localism Act states that 'social interests' include cultural, recreational and sporting interests,

In our case, the heritage value of a site would fall under the heading of a 'cultural interest'.

Any battlefield (or part or purlieu of a battlefield) in private ownership, and 'whose future protection is not assured by other means, may be eligible to be nominated to the relevant local authority for inclusion in their register of ACVs. The purpose of this article is to suggest that Battlefields Trust regions look at their battlefields to see if any might benefit from this provision. It is not a manual on how to apply for ACV status; that is set 'out in full in the website above.

This is a very niche part of the planning system and one for the aficionados. ACV status gives a site a locus in the planning process, but no specific protection. Its greatest value may be an earlier alert than the Trust might otherwise receive of an intention to destroy a site's heritage value by adverse development. The 'Community Right to Bid' does not carry any funding and it is most unlikely that the Trust would ever realistically be in a position to make a commercial bid for a site to pre-empt its development, so please do not get your hopes up that this could be any sort of panacea. That said, 'every weapon in the planning armoury at the Trust's disposal should be used if it can.

The section of the second St Albans battlefield covered by the new ACV is not the part shown in Graham Turner's painting of the battle, which is already registered commons.

Legend to Painting:

The Second Battle of St Albans, 17 February 1461 by Graham Turner ©. Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, leads the Lancastrian army past St Peter's church and out of St Albans to attack the left wing of the Yorkist army, commanded by Lord Montague, on Bernard's Heath. For more details on Graham's paintings, prints and cards, visit his website at www.studio88.co.uk

Legend to Photo:

The area of the battlefield that has been registered as an Asset of Community Value.

Photo: Chris May

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