

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

NEW CEMETERY - SITE AND FUNDING

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Brandon Clayton, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Local Environment and Health
Relevant Head of Service	Guy Revans, Head of Environmental Services
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

To identify a new site, on which a cemetery can be established. To be owned and managed by Redditch Borough Council; and to agree funding for a feasibility study and the development of a timetable.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that

- 1) a sum of £35,000 be allocated in the 2011/12 the capital programme for the pre-planning permission survey works and any preliminary civil works of the chosen site so that a report can be brought to a future meeting of the Executive Committee regarding future capital funding requirements; and**

subject to which, to RESOLVE that
- 2) the location of the new cemetery site at Brooklands Lane be approved by members; and**
- 3) expenditure of up to the sum agreed by the Council at 1) above be approved in accordance with Standing Order 41, for the purposes defined in the report.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Redditch Borough Council operates and manages three cemeteries Plymouth Road, Edgioake Lane and Abbey Cemetery and one closed church yard at Feckenham.
- 3.2 Plymouth Road is closed to new burials, Edgioake Lane Cemetery has approximately 25 years burial provision available and Abbey now has approximately 4 years left. These figures are only indicative based on

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

trends; however they can change for a number of reasons. Some reasons include greater take up of exclusive right reservation, unsuitable ground conditions leading to plots being made unavailable and high death rates to name but a few.

- 3.3 It is with this in mind that preliminary work has been carried out by Officers on sites located at Ipsley Church Lane, Brooklands Lane and Foxlydiat Woods Brockhill Lane.
- 3.4 Two prime sites for the development had been identified and a legal appraisal commissioned to ensure there were no fundamental legally based issues which would eliminate them from further consideration. As none were found, the various evaluations for both sites have been progressed. A third site will also be included although a legal appraisal has not been commissioned as this site has only recently been identified.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Abbey Cemetery is quickly running out of burial space. It is therefore a priority to look at sites within this area of the borough. There is a need to identify new burial land as matter of increasing urgency. With this forward planning the Authority should identify, in order of preference, a new site designing the chosen site as a cemetery which is a place of beauty and not a 'blot on the landscape'.
- 4.2 A badly selected and poorly laid out cemetery will be difficult to manage. In the long term it will become expensive to administer and a constant source of concern for the Authority and for future managers. We should therefore attempt to identify a site with the future in mind.
- 4.3 Given the length of time, due to the exhaustive enquiries which need to take place on the Archaeological, Ecological, Environmental and Planning aspects of a new cemetery, Officers felt that this should now be progresses to ensure that the borough has a site for burials into the future.
- 4.4 Site selection**
Land of gently rolling characteristics provides a good landscape effect and is suitable for burial grounds. Flat land can be monotonous, even with the addition of planting, although maintenance is generally easier and grave excavations can normally be done without problems.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2nd December 2010

4.5 Steep contoured land should be avoided. It is both expensive to layout and consequently to maintain. Not only does it cause problems with excavations but can be a constant source of trouble in maintaining memorials.

4.6 Size of site

One of the major considerations is size. Obviously the larger the site the more burial capacity will be available. As a general rule approximately 800 full earth graves can be accommodated within each acre of land. Space will also be needed for roads and pathways.

4.7 Accessibility

The site chosen should be easily accessible, though ideally not on a busy main road. It would also be useful if the site was easily accessible by public transport.

4.8 Land near to a stream / canal / river etc should be avoided due to the potential for water-logging. Land that is known to have a high water table can cause similar problems.

4.9 The neighbouring area should be considered carefully. Noise from workplaces or schools can cause problems when people are attending a funeral or visiting a grave.

4.10 Drainage from the graves must not have the potential to pollute the domestic water supply or groundwater.

4.11 Trial excavations

Prior to selecting a site it will be necessary to excavate trial holes to a depth of at least 8ft (the depth of a treble depth interment). These holes should be dug in various locations around the site in order to determine the general nature of the subsoil.

4.12 The ideal soil is light sandy loam which is easily worked and drains itself. However the geology of Redditch could mean that the less favourable dense clay which is almost always wet and makes excavation both difficult and expensive to work, will be our main option.

4.13 The available options

Ipsley Church Lane – The main site is an area of 16.2 acres and has a public right of way more or less across the middle of it. There is a second area on the other side of the lane, currently known as The Arboretum, which has areas of established and dense woodland which could be developed

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

into a green burial site. The aerial views of the proposed site are shown in Appendix 5 of the background paper.

4.14 Brooklands Lane – This is effectively un-developed agricultural/grazing land divided into two areas one of 11.2 acres and one of 11 acres on either side of the lane. The aerial view of the proposed site is shown in Appendix 5 of the background paper.

4.15 Foxlydiate Woods site – this is a steep sloping mounded area of open grassland space, which forms a buffer for the Foxlydiate woodland against the Bromsgrove Highway and adjacent Brockhill Lane. The area of the site measures 10.3 acres.

4.16 All three sites are owned by Redditch Borough Council.

4.17 Analysis of Potential Sites and Facilities Required

Following initial meetings with relevant parties, a summary of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each site were summarised as shown below.

Ipsley Church Lane

Advantages	Disadvantages
Proximity of Near by Pub	Presence of tournament standard Skate Board Park/BMX Track which has potential to host major national and European competitions and festivals.
Good Access from Main Highway – only Minor Changes required for Better Visibility	Relatively Narrow Width of Lane
Land Easily Adaptable	Potential archaeological issues Stemming from the Proximity of the Church.
Less Isolated Site but Well Screened to Give Seclusion	Bore hole and well in centre of site.
Perceived Larger Area and Less Infrastructure Required	Loss of Existing Amenity
Space has Estimated 75 year Life	Drainage at the Lower End
Potential for Church Services	Football Pitches

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

Ideal topography. Good scope for cemetery development.	Public Right of Way Access – Possible New Entrance Required Widening of Lane – Probably Necessary
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Neutral Issues: Potential for Catering: Bus Services: Cycle Path: Pedestrian Access

The Arboretum – Ipsley Church Lane

Advantages	Disadvantages
Potential for Woodland Burial Good Natural Appearance Closer to Buildings than location would suggest and therefore less secluded. Little Impact on Current Residential and Other Property	Assumption that it is a Woodland Site Potential Ground Water Issues as Soil is thought to be Clay Impact of the Removal of Trees on the Eco-system Requires the most Ground Work of all Sites but could be Considered as More Adaptable The Need to Remove Roots

Neutral Issues: The Need to Have the Entrance close to the Church

Brooklands Lane

Advantages	Disadvantages
Available Good Proximity	Topography – Quite Hilly on the Smaller Site Ground Water – Drainage

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

Affects Less People	Security – No Overlook/Need for Lighting
Medium Amount of Preparation Work	
Utilities Already in Place	Access – Possible New Entrance Required
Not a Cut-through or Walkway	Widening of Lane – Probably Necessary
Oast House Pub Near by	No Horizon/Views as it Sits in a Trough
Potential Parking for Horses	Buildings Currently in Use on Smaller Site
Tree Planting Facility	
Blank canvas	No existing Roadways
Good road links	Terms of Existing Leases not Known
Near to bus service	Smaller Site not well Screened
	Underground Power Cables

Foxlydiat woods site

Advantages	Disadvantages
Central proximity to Redditch and Bromsgrove	Not near to public transport- does need to be a major consideration as not everyone has access to a car.
Relative close proximity to current administrative base.	Contours- the whole location is a steep mounded feature. This is not ideal for a cemetery as there are likely to be elderly visitors.
Already a car park on site which could be adapted for frequent cemetery visits.	Same feature make the process of grave digging harder and is a greater likelihood that spaces can be lost therefore reducing the cemetery capacity.
Location away from residential area and therefore away from possible antisocial behaviour.	
Good road links.	

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

<p>Easily accessible by car</p> <p>Nice views</p> <p>Public house nearby</p>	<p>Noisy- the site is located adjacent to the main Bromsgrove highway. In its current state it does not have any buffer to that noise.</p> <p>Very exposed- it is used by kite fliers. A lot of screening and landscaping will need to be done to protect the site from noise, to assist with a feeling of seclusion and to possibly level the site.</p> <p>First impression is that there is only 20 years usable burial space available unless the mounded feature is removed.</p> <p>Difficult to separate main religious organisations roman catholic, Muslim and others including Church of England.</p> <p>Poorly drained boggy even at the summit with evidence of wetland flora.</p>
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4.18 There are other elements which would require further investigations in relation to the above site include;

- a) Environmental searches eg soil, ground water.
- b) Utilities. Doesn't appear to be any mains utilities.
- c) Archaeological
- d) Previous uses

4.19 It is difficult to define precisely the facilities that need to be available on site. Although it is desirable that the site have a service chapel, however, toilet facilities and multiple water points for use by visitors would be the priority. It is a moot point whether or not in the early stages of development it would be economic to have a café/catering facility on site, although it should be noted that these are becoming increasingly popular. Visitor forecasts, based on experience at the current Cemetery, will need to be calculated in order to judge the viability of more optional services. The overriding concern should be the availability of land for future burials as any infrastructure would reduce the potential for longevity of the site.

4.20 Stakeholders' Opinions and Reports

The following policies and guidance notes are included in full as Appendices within the Appendix - feasibility study, which is available on request:

- Appendix 6 - Connecting Redditch – Community Facilities Cemeteries – Policy C(CF) Point 2
- Appendix 7 - Summary Notes from the Environment Agency on New Cemetery Provision
- Appendix 8 - Assessing the Groundwater Pollution Potential of Cemetery Developments
- Appendix 9 - Requirements for an Archaeological Evaluation at Two Proposed Cemetery Sites
- Appendix 10 - Ecologist Report by Peter Gondris
- Appendix 11 - Environmental Report by Mark Holland

4.21 Summary Comparison of the Alternative Sites

In overall terms, all sites have the potential to provide a new cemetery facility for Redditch Borough Council.

4.22 On two prime criteria, namely the cost of development and the extent of the facilities that would be available if equal capital sums were invested in each site, Ipsley Church Lane and its associated arboretum would be seen as having the advantage over both the Brooklands Lane and Foxlydiate Woods site.

4.23 However, its adoption would not be without penalty and therefore the advantages have to be balanced against the loss of the existing amenity of being an open public space which has a public right of way across it. The impact and social effects of a cemetery here also needs to be assessed in relation to the presence of nearby leisure facilities such as the skateboard park, the tournament standard BMX track with its proposed festival expectations and the football pitches.

4.24 In terms of ecological and physical restraints, in relation to the main Ipsley Church Lane site, there is a concern that drainage at the lower end of the site may restrict the ultimate capacity of the cemetery.

4.25 There are also potential groundwater issues to be addressed in relation to the arboretum, because the soil is mainly clay, as well as the need to assess the ecological impact of removing trees and roots from this area.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

- 4.26 The two possible areas for development in Brooklands Lane do not impact any existing public amenities and leisure facilities. However, the topography of the smaller site is quite hilly and will require additional heavy landscaping to realise the potential.
- 4.27 There are no existing paths or roadways within either site so then the development of these would require a level of investment .
- 4.28 The smaller site on Brooklands lane is not well screened so a detailed long-term tree planting scheme would need to be put in place.
- 4.29 The believed presence of underground power cables is a very definite concern and the decision will ultimately be dependent upon the lease agreements, as to whether they are relocated or removed.
- 4.30 This site does not have the horizon or views from it that Ipsley Church Lane offers and therefore trying to create an environment of openness and tranquillity is likely to be a challenge.
- 4.31 The area adjacent to the Foxlydiat woods has not undergone the same initial searches as the two other sites but the gradient of the area does not lend itself to be a good alternative. The topography is steep throughout most of the site which in itself reduces the availability of useable ground for burial.
- 4.32 The obvious and easy decision on balance for reasons of loss of amenity, cost and ultimate benefit to the bereaved, would be to assess the potential of the Brooklands Lane site first.

4.33 Phasing of the development

As a general guide there are phases of cemetery development. These will start once a site has been identified.

4.34 Stage 1 - Site survey, feasibility study, risk assessment and liaison with the Environment Agency

The overall aim of this stage is to provide sufficient information such that the viability of the proposed development can be assessed, and a detailed project plan can be developed. Stage 1 normally comprises a Tier 1 risk assessment a topographic survey, geophysical (soil) survey, site technical appraisal (excavation of test pits, removal of soil samples for laboratory analysis etc), production of outline development/construction options to mitigate risk to the environment, and liaison with the Environment Agency (EA). For sites considered against EA criteria to be of intermediate or high risk to the environment, more detailed investigative work will be conducted

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

to conform to the requirements of Tier 2 or Tier 3 risk assessments. This may include the installation of dipwells to facilitate the monitoring of groundwater over an extended period.

4.35 Stage 2 - Design

This will take into account all of the information gathered during Stage 1, this stage is develop the design which will form the basis for producing a set of detailed designs, specifications, bills of quantities and construction drawings for the project.

The resulting detailed design and specification will be scientifically sound in terms of addressing the specific issues prevailing at the site, and will provide the basis for the production of tender documentation for potential contractors

4.36 Stage 3 - The Tender Process

Depending on requirements, this is where the production of all of the necessary documentation required for the tender process.

4.37 Stage 4 - Project Management

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There is a recommendation that £35 000 be allocated from the capital budget to allow the initial work to be carried out. If these investigations show that the Brooklands Lane site is unsuitable as a cemetery then further sites would need to be brought back to the executive committee. This would require additional investigation costs.
- 5.2 Once the initial phase has been carried out there will be an additional funding requirement to carry out stage 2, 3 and 4. Although this figure cannot yet be defined, indicative costs have been advised at £250k -£300k for the first hectares development. This figure would include civil works to incorporate approximately 1600 burials. The development of the second hectare onwards would cost between £40k - £70k
- 5.3 There will still be a cost of carrying out burials and maintenance of the existing burial sites even when closed to new burials in addition to the cost of carrying out burials and maintaining the new cemetery. This will include the provision of additional maintenance staff.
- 5.4 Budgetary provision does not exist for this development.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2nd December 2010

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 must be adhered to when identifying a new location for a cemetery.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

C (CF).2 Connecting Redditch - Community Matters.
Appendix 6 of Feasibility study - Appendix 1,

8. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

The new cemetery will encompass aspects of all the council objectives but with a focus on the clean and green priority. The new cemetery will meet all aspects of council's values and deliver a quality service that meets the needs of its residents, that of a continuation of a choice between burial and cremation.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

9.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:

- a) The main risk is that of agreeing to the site(s) and none of the chosen options being usable following specific environment agency investigations.
- b) Long term commitment to the provision of a cemetery.
- c) Adverse publicity in relation to the chosen location.

9.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- a) The main risk is that of agreeing to the site(s) and none of the chosen options being usable following specific environment agency investigations.

9.3 Risk Register: n/a

Key Objective Ref No: n/a

Key Objective: *Maximise collection of Council Tax and Business Rates*

9.4 Long term commitment to the provision of a cemetery including financial commitment.

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

- 9.5 *Risk Register: n/a*
Key Objective Ref No: n/a
Key Objective: n/a
a) Adverse publicity in relation to the chosen location
- 9.6 *Risk Register: n/a*
Key Objective Ref No: n/a
Key Objective: n/a
- 9.7 Currently the risk identified in the first, second and third bullet points in 9.1 are not addressed by any risk register and will be added to the (*insert appropriate name e.g. Financial Services*) risk register as follows:
- 9.8 Management of risks identified above
- 9.9 Actions
- 9.10 Risk 1- Continue to search for available land for future burial, this land may have to be purchased at additional costs not included in this report or be land available outside the Redditch Borough Council boundary the same may apply.
- 9.11 Risk 2- Provide a wide choice of burial and memorial options to offset any costs which will initially and in future be incurred by the authority.
- 9.12 Risk 3- Allow adequate consultation during the planning process, following stage one environment agency investigations.
- 10. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1 The loss of the use of a cemetery for residents of Redditch Borough would reduce the choice in relation to death. If a site were not identified and developed would mean that they are either cremated, buried locally in a private woodland style cemetery, buried in their local parish church yard or have to be buried outside of the Redditch boundary, this may include a none resident tariff.
- 10.2 The specific customer implications relating to the 3 site options can be drawn from the advantages and disadvantages as listed above.
- 10.3 Due to the sensitivity of the proposals weighed against the pressing need to locate a new site for burial, it is important that recommendations are

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2nd December 2010

communicated to the customer. This will take form during the planning and design process, once the preferred list is approved and the environment agency are satisfied with the chosen location following site investigations.

- 10.4 Internal customers will be affected as whichever site is chosen work to maintain the site will be called upon.

11. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Depending upon the site chosen the new cemetery will provide the opportunity and capability to offer a number of alternative styles of burial as well as a greater range of memorial styles to provide greater emphasis on creativity, in addition areas for specific faith groups could be facilitated, something which in a dwindling area we have been unable to enhance for some years.

12. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS, PROCUREMENT AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

- 12.1 No other sites have been identified by Officers as being available for development. But the loss of cemetery amenity for residents would limit choice (as above) for residents when deciding their final resting place.
- 12.2 Variety of memorial and burial schemes can offset maintenance costs associated with cemetery management.
- 12.3 Both asset management and procurement will be involved when the development begins.

13. CLIMATE CHANGE, CARBON IMPLICATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY

Whichever site is identified as the location for the new Redditch Borough Council cemetery, a great opportunity will exist to develop the cemetery in line with industry thinking in this field. Areas will be marked and designed with the eco-system in mind. All three sites offer the opportunity to encourage biodiversity.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

The identification, planning, design and development of the new cemetery will involve a number of internal departments, but not directly specific to human resources.

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

15. GOVERNANCE/PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None.

**16. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS INCLUDING SECTION 17 OF
CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

The public cemetery will need to be safe and secure. This will require a gentle balance of aesthetic screening incorporating security features such as fencing. There will also be a need to provide security measures when the cemetery is not open to the public.

17. HEALTH INEQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

18. LESSONS LEARNT

The bereavement service industry has a very good network of people and organisations that have been through this process and are always available to assist and advise including a number them working within neighbouring authorities. Currently of the areas looked at, Brooklands Lane appears to be the only suitable site (subject to the site evaluation)and if this proves not to be the case, officers would need to bring a further report on alternatives back to the Executive Committee.

19. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable at this juncture. However, once a site has been identified this will form part of the planning process.

20. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	yes
Chief Executive	no
Executive Director (S151 Officer) <i>(must approve Financial Implications before report submitted to Leader's Group/Portfolio Holders Briefing)</i>	yes
Executive Director – Leisure, Cultural, Environmental and Community Services	yes

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE**

2nd December 2010

Executive Director – Planning & Regeneration, Regulatory and Housing Services	yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	no
Head of Service <i>(i.e. your own HoS)</i>	yes
Head of Resources <i>(<u>must</u> approve significant HR Implications before report submitted to Leader's Group/Portfolio Holders Briefing)</i>	no
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services <i>(for approval of any significant Legal Implications)</i>	no
Corporate Procurement Team <i>(for approval of any procurement implications)</i>	no

21. WARDS AFFECTED

All wards will be affected if no site is positively identified but cemetery options are located in abbey ward (Brooklands Lane), Matchborough Ward (Ipsley Church Lane) and Batchley Ward (Brockhill Lane).

22. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Feasibility Study carried out by Goldray Ltd. Available on request

23. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

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