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**Future Cemetery Provision**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Harvey
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Assistant Director	Simon Parry
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Wards Affected	Greenlands & Lakeside Ward & Winyates Ward
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Council Priority	Parks and Open Spaces/Community Safety & Regeneration
Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Executive Committee RESOLVE that:-**

- 1) Land located at the current Abbey Cemetery site, as indicated in Figure 2 in Appendix 1, be utilised for earth burial provision for an interim period of up to 10 years commencing in January 2027.**
- 2) A review be commissioned of the potential to use the site indicated at Figure 3 of Appendix 1 for burial provision in the long-term.**

**The Executive Committee is asked to RECOMMEND that:-**

- 3) To begin a process of incorporating new burial provision within the new Borough of Redditch Local Plan.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Redditch Borough Council operates and manages three cemeteries, Plymouth Road, Edgioake Lane and Abbey Cemetery and St Stephen's, St Luke's and Feckenham closed church yards.
- 2.2 Plymouth Road is closed to new burials, Edgioake Lane Cemetery has approximately five years burial provision available at its current usage, and Abbey had approximately 2 years left. These figures are only

indicative based on trends; however, they can change for a number of reasons; including continued increase in cremations versus burials and fluctuating local/county death rates.

- 2.3 Work had been undertaken in recent years to assess the suitability of several different sites across the Borough to provide additional burial capacity, included in various reports to Council.
- 2.4 In total 26 sites were originally reviewed across the Borough with The Council previously agreed upon the Ipsley Church lane site as the most favourable option. This was agreed at the meeting of the Executive in December 2021 and subsequently at Council in January 2022.
- 2.5 The appropriation of land off Ipsley Church Lane was agreed at the meeting of the Executive on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022.
- 2.6 Following the elections in May 2024, a new Labour Administration took on the leadership of the council, and their manifesto included putting a hold on any further works on the Ipsley Church Lane site whilst a review of alternative sites was carried out.
- 2.7 In November 2024, a new site review was independently commissioned with CDS Consultants that provide expert advice within a range of topics including Cemetery Provision. CDS looked at 10 locations , comprising a total of 13 sites . These sites were assessed in accordance with a holistic site search criteria tailored to cemetery development to further interpret their suitability.
- 2.8 Of the original 13 sites, eight sites were found to be potentially suitable for cemetery development.
- 2.9 The results of the review produced a short list of the most viable sites.
  - 2.9.1 Proposed Site 2A – Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD. (South of Arrow Valley Country Park).
  - 2.9.2 Proposed Site 2B – Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD. (South of Arrow Valley Country Park).
  - 2.9.3 Proposed Site 5B – Ipsley Church Lane, Ipsley, B98 0TJ. (South of St Peters Church).
  - 2.9.4 Proposed Site 4 – Edgioake Cemetery, Astwood Bank, B96 6BG.
- 2.10 Further analysis reduced this list further. Site 2A is effectively too small and wooded which would only give up to 15 years burial space at best with significant woodland clearance required so has been discounted. The potential extension at Edgioake Cemetery has been discounted because the land in question is privately owned, and following some initial enquiries, the owner has no interest in selling.

- 2.11 With only 2 years of full earth burial space left at Abbey Cemetery and the risk of Funeral Directors diverting business to Bromsgrove sites should Abbey close for burials the following additional option was tabled.

To reuse a section of land at the Abbey Cemetery that has previously been used for ashes scattering . This land identified has not been scattered on since mid-2024 and was only used sporadically before that. There are no laws that prohibit this , so the main challenge for the council will be around the communication used to raise this with the community.

- 2.12 Following this the planning team also tabled the idea that burial provision should be considered in the next round of local plans as more new houses come online.
- 2.13 This then led to the current set of recommendations outlined in this paper that gives a short-, medium-, and long-term strategy for burial provision in the local area.

### **3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

- 3.1 The purpose of the consultant's (CDS) report was to review the risk analysis of the two resolutions for the future burial provision for Redditch Borough Council.
- The Bromsgrove and Redditch area is reaching a capacity for new burial space, furthermore, as stated in the Redditch Local Plan, 1.7 hectares of land is required for burial provision.
- Both options were assessed against burial information across the Bromsgrove and Redditch area, with local policy in mind. Furthermore, the risk for each option was assessed using Risk Register analysis. Figure 1 shows the location of both Resolution 1 at Abbey Cemetery, B97 6RR and Resolution 2 (Proposed Site 2B) at Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD.

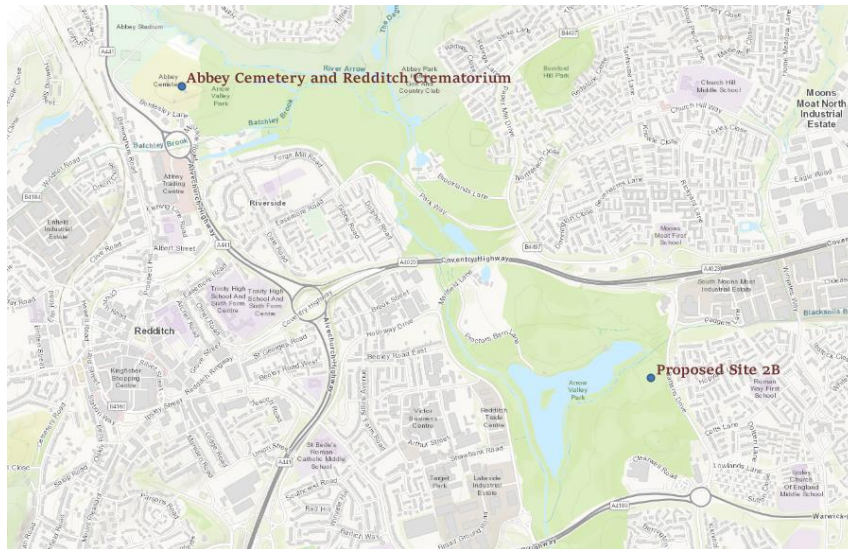


Figure 1. the location of Resolution 1 (Abbey Cemetery) and Resolution 2 (Proposed Cemetery) within the Redditch Area.

3.2 **Resolution 1** Abbey Cemetery and Redditch Crematorium, B97 6RR, has been proposed by Redditch Borough Council as an option for further burial accommodation. This would be achieved by repurposing existing space designation for ash scattering and using it to accommodate for full body interment .



The blue box to the left highlights the ashes scattering area being proposed for reuse as full burial, with the purple area denoting the remaining ashes scattering area.

There is limited information on repurposing ash scattering land for burials. However, the reuse of graves is a similar topic, and it is understood from The Law Commission that a grave can be reused after 75 years of the original burial. This is of course permitting consent from the family of the deceased person, should there be an objection no reuse can occur for another 25 years.

It is therefore concluded that there is no current legislation stating that the repurposing of ash scattering land for burial use is not permitted. Furthermore, as this land is not including a physical burial or physical memorialisation, this topic can be taken lightly in comparison to burial re-use.

This resolution does however come with potential reputational risk due to the repurposing of up to 30% of the existing ashes scattering space that wraps round the back of the Crematorium for full earth burials. People may be upset at the idea so a clear well structure communication plan is needed with councillor support to mitigate the potential adverse reactions from some. It should also be noted that this resolution still leaves 3 acres of land for scattering with an open aspect looking over the hills behind the site.

With the land already within the boundary of the existing cemetery the costs will be for the ongoing installation of plinths, an opportunity to enhance roadways, paths, and landscaping to separate the new space from the rest of the ashes scattering area.

- 3.3 **Resolution 2.** The Land North of Morrisons and West of the B4497, B98 0JD was considered a suitable site for cemetery development following a site feasibility report undertaken by CDS. This site was referenced Proposed Site 2B alongside the total 13 sites assessed (of which eight were deemed suitable). The redline boundary of Proposed Site 2B is shown in Figure 3. The proposed site is approximately 6.2 acres. This would provide for an estimated 4,960 burials (excluding consideration for burial buffers and space for landscaping and potential infrastructure). The site is flat, open and has good transport links. Against the average of 71 new burials per annum, this would provide burial accommodation for a further 69 years. This is of course a high-level calculation based off estimates, which should be noted.





Figure 3. The redline boundary of resolution 2 (Proposed site 2B)

As long as Resolution 1 is granted which will give 10 years additional full earth burials and gives enough time for the council to pursue a new site. As stated, the 2 main immediate concerns around Site 2b are any potential issues with geology & groundwater and from previous cases the potential impact Sport England could have due to the land having been used in the past for sport provision. There is a hope as this was only ever a temporary sport provision that this may not turn out to be a problem, but it is worth tackling it head on in the initial stages of the process.

Aside from this the land does currently hold 'Primarily Open Space' status within the existing Redditch Local plan that needs to be addressed.

At this early-stage initial funding will be utilised to investigate ground water and geology issues as this will dictate next steps.

**Appendix 1** point 48 page 14 outlines a timeline.

- 3.4 **Recommendation 3** . Explore all feasible options for providing new burial space or funding the provision of new burial space though the policies and allocations in the new Borough of Redditch Local Plan, this

will if successful attempt to keep pace with new housing stock and provide a long-term solution.

- 3.5 To conclude it essential that Resolution1 is agreed which will then give the council 10 additional years of burial provision . This then enables the council to progress resolution 2 which as proven by the process around Ipsley will take considerable time. This is because of items such as geology and hydrology work taking up to a year to assess , the overall planning process, consultations, council processes etc.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The funding for new burial provision is included within the medium-term financial plan for 2025/6.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 must be adhered to when identifying a new location for a cemetery.
- 5.2 As an authority we have no statutory duty to provide a cemetery however as a community resource to support the local population it could be argued there is a moral obligation. If no cemetery is provided, then people would have to travel further afield to find a location for a burial which could be of either a whole coffin or of a cremated remains casket.

**6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Council Priority**

- 6.1 This is aligned with the Parks & Green Spaces/Community Safety & Regeneration short and medium- long-term priorities within the Council Plan 2023 & 2024.

**Climate Change Implications**

- 6.2 As part of the environmental impact assessment to be carried out for the proposed burial site consideration should be given to the potential contamination of the soil and groundwater from the chemicals used in the embalming process. This will include options to mitigate any impact that is found a part of the assessment.

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 6.3 A lack of cemetery provision within the Borough could lead to additional hardship for local families such as increased travel costs attending a

site outside the Borough. This could further be difficult for the more vulnerable members of the Borough for whom traveling has to be by specialist arrangement.

A potential lack of cemetery provision could also lead to longer term health and social issues as families may struggle to grieve in the traditional way at a grave side.

The council will make sure that 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 will be facilitated to include significant provision for the Muslim community, something which in a dwindling space at Abbey we have been unable to enhance for some years.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 7.1 The authority may be at reputational risk if a new cemetery site is not provided as this could lead to the private sector opening a facility (subject to the standard planning approval process). This might lead to higher fees and charges being charged than would otherwise been the case if the authority had provided the service.
- 7.2 The authority may be at financial risk should a competing facility be opened within the Borough by the private sector. If this were to happen then the income levels projected in future plans will drop.
- 7.3 The authority may put other council owned cemeteries under pressure should Abbey close to further full earth burials and an alternative site is not secured.
- 7.4 Resolution 1 comes with reputational risk from the repurposing existing ashes scattering ground for full earth burials due to upset from the public.
- 7.5 Resolution 2 comes with the risk of failing to secure planning permission and the requirement to find yet another potential parcel of land .

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendix 1 – A Risk and Options appraisal report for a new Cemetery  
– Author CDS.

**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**



**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Executive Committee  
2025**

**11th March**

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<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Harvey	24 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2025
Lead Director / Assistant Director	Simon Parry	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2025
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2025
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2025
Climate Change Team (if climate change implications apply)	Matthew Eccles	19 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2025