



**ADDITIONAL BURIAL SPACE TO SERVE THE TRING  
AREA**

**JULY 2015**

**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL**



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the case for additional burial space to serve the Tring area. In particular, the paper considers how much additional land is needed and whether it is better to extend the existing Tring Cemetery, provide a detached extension to the cemetery or opt for a completely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery. The conclusions on these matters have informed decisions on what the Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan Document and the master plan for the West of Tring site say about the cemetery issue.

### **Tring cemetery**

Tring Cemetery was opened in 1894. The cemetery covers 2.12 hectares (5.2 acres) and is situated in Aylesbury Road, on the western edge of Tring (see Figure 1).

The cemetery provides a traditional burial site with Victorian memorials and the more modern lawn type. It also offers a dedicated cremated remains burial area, for those who have opted to cremate their loved one and still wish to have a memorial dedicated to them.

Tring Cemetery is a very picturesque and well used cemetery, fully supported by the local community. It is often complimented as well manicured and it boasts a host of topiary. The cemetery has a beautiful period chapel which can be used for services or events such as community meetings. As the cemetery was designed for horse drawn traffic, the access roadway is quite narrow, only leaving sufficient parking for the cortege on the day of the funeral. The Council has entered the cemetery into the Green Flag Award scheme for 2015. The scheme recognises excellence in the management of public open spaces.

Space for further burials at the cemetery is now limited, so it is important to examine the options for extending the cemetery or providing a new cemetery.

### **Local allocation LA5**

The Dacorum Core Strategy (adopted September 2013) includes six local allocations, which are modest proposed extensions to the borough's towns and large villages. The local allocations will help meet local housing needs and plug gaps in local infrastructure. The development of these local allocations requires changes to the Green Belt boundary.

One of the Core Strategy's local allocations is LA5: Icknield Way, west of Tring. The Core Strategy proposes housing, playing fields and open space, employment development and a potential extension to the cemetery at LA5.

Figure 1 shows the boundary of local allocation LA5 and the existing cemetery.

In the Core Strategy, the cemetery extension is referred to as 'potential'. This is because the need for an extension was known locally, but no detailed advice had been provided at the time by the Council's previous Bereavement Services Team

Leader regarding requirements to extend the site. Also, it was considered that this was an appropriate issue to defer to the Site Allocations stage.

In September 2014, the Council consulted on:

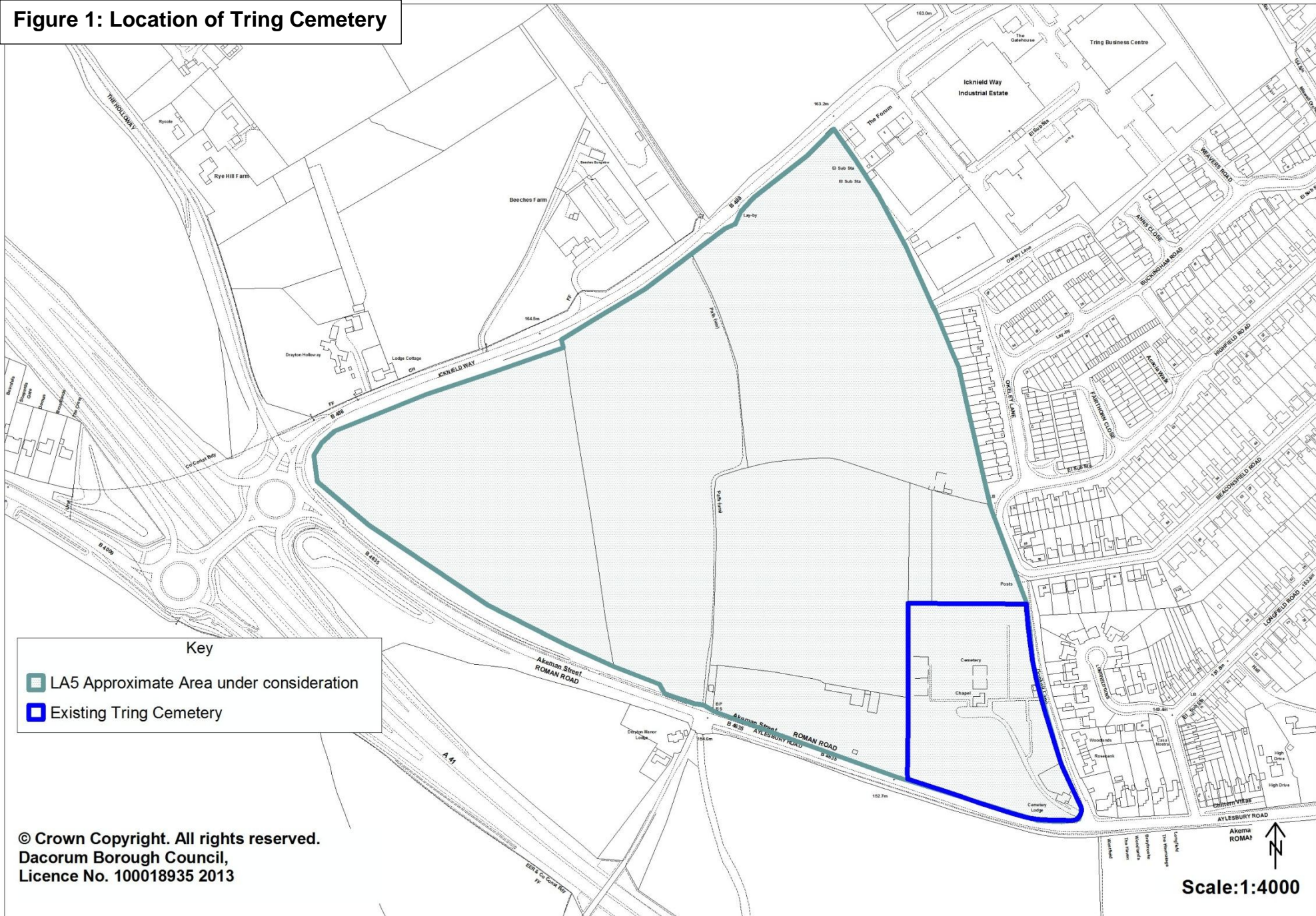
- The Pre-Submission version of the Site Allocations document; and
- The LA5 Draft Master Plan.

Policy LA5 (Icknield Way, West of Tring) in the Site Allocation document provides further planning guidance on this site. The policy sets out the land uses to be delivered on LA5, including the following:

“An extension to the cemetery of around 1.6 hectares, in the western fields, except for car parking and associated facilities which will be provided within the development area.”

More detailed guidance on the planning of LA5 can be found in the Draft Master Plan. This document includes a section on ‘cemetery extension principles’.

**Figure 1: Location of Tring Cemetery**



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## **2. NATIONAL BURIAL TRENDS**

Many cemeteries were built by the Victorians. This demonstrates the foresight of these people who were planning well into the future without the benefits of the statistical information we have today.

A useful overview of national burial trends is provided by a House of Commons Select Committee report, produced in 2001 (see Appendix 1). Key points in this report include the following:

- many cemeteries are reaching or have reached capacity (paragraph 4);
- cremation rates have been increasing, but have now levelled out at around 72% (paragraph 16); and
- the concept of 'green' or woodland burial is now being taken up by increasing numbers of burial authorities and private sector providers (paragraph 18).

A recent survey undertaken by the BBC (September 2013) found that 44% of cemeteries surveyed (over 700) would run out of burial space within the next 20 years and 25% within the next 10 years.

In recent years, there has been a fairly constant split between burials (25%) and cremation (75%) and this split is generally used for cemetery planning purposes. There are many sources of data and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountants (CIPFA), the Institute of Cemetery and Crematoria Management (ICCM) and the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) all produce regional figures. The regional figures can vary from the national averages by up to 5%.

National trend predictions show that there is likely to be an increase in burials as a potential backlash against cremation develops. This move away from cremation arises through growing concerns regarding airborne emissions from crematoria. The public perception of contributions towards global warming could see a strong move away from cremation towards more natural burials.

The interest and demand for natural burial (also called green or woodland burial) has grown in recent years as an alternative option for people concerned about the potential environmental impact of modern funerals. Indeed, Tring Town Council has requested this alternative form of interment be considered in any additional development of the cemetery. Further information on natural burial is provided in Appendix 2.

In Dacorum, there is only one cemetery (in Hemel Hempstead) where the woodland type of natural burial is available. This type of burial currently accounts for 1% of burials in the borough, but is rising in popularity.

Two other options are being considered nationally for disposal of the dead, namely promession (essentially deep freezing followed by vibrating the deceased into pieces) and water resolution (essentially high speed alkaline hydrolysis). These options would require a change in the law before they could be introduced. They are seen as alternatives to cremation and are expected to be considered by crematoria to operate alongside traditional crematoria plant.



Based on national trends, it is considered that future planning of cemetery provision in Tring should reflect the normally accepted national split and assume:

- 25% burials
- 75% cremations

### **3. TRING CEMETERY EXTENSION: EXAMINATION OF KEY ISSUES**

#### **Issue 1: How many burials have taken place at Tring Cemetery in recent years?**

The table below shows that since 2008 there has been an annual average of:

- 30 full burials, of which 19 (63%) have involved new graves, with the remainder being in re-opened existing graves; and
- 24 burials of cremation remains, with 17 (71%) in new graves and the rest in re-opened graves.

#### **Recent burial figures at Tring Cemetery**

	Full burials			Cremation remains		
	Total	New graves	Re-open existing	Total	New graves	Re-open existing
2008/9	32	19	13	19	13	6
2009/10	32	20	12	17	12	5
2010/11	28	17	11	26	18	8
2011/12	32	21	11	24	16	8
2012/13	33	21	12	23	16	7
2013/14	25	17	8	31	23	8
2014/15	25	21	4	28	24	4
Annual average 2008-2015	30	19	10	24	17	7

#### **Issue 2: How many burials a year are expected at Tring Cemetery in the future?**

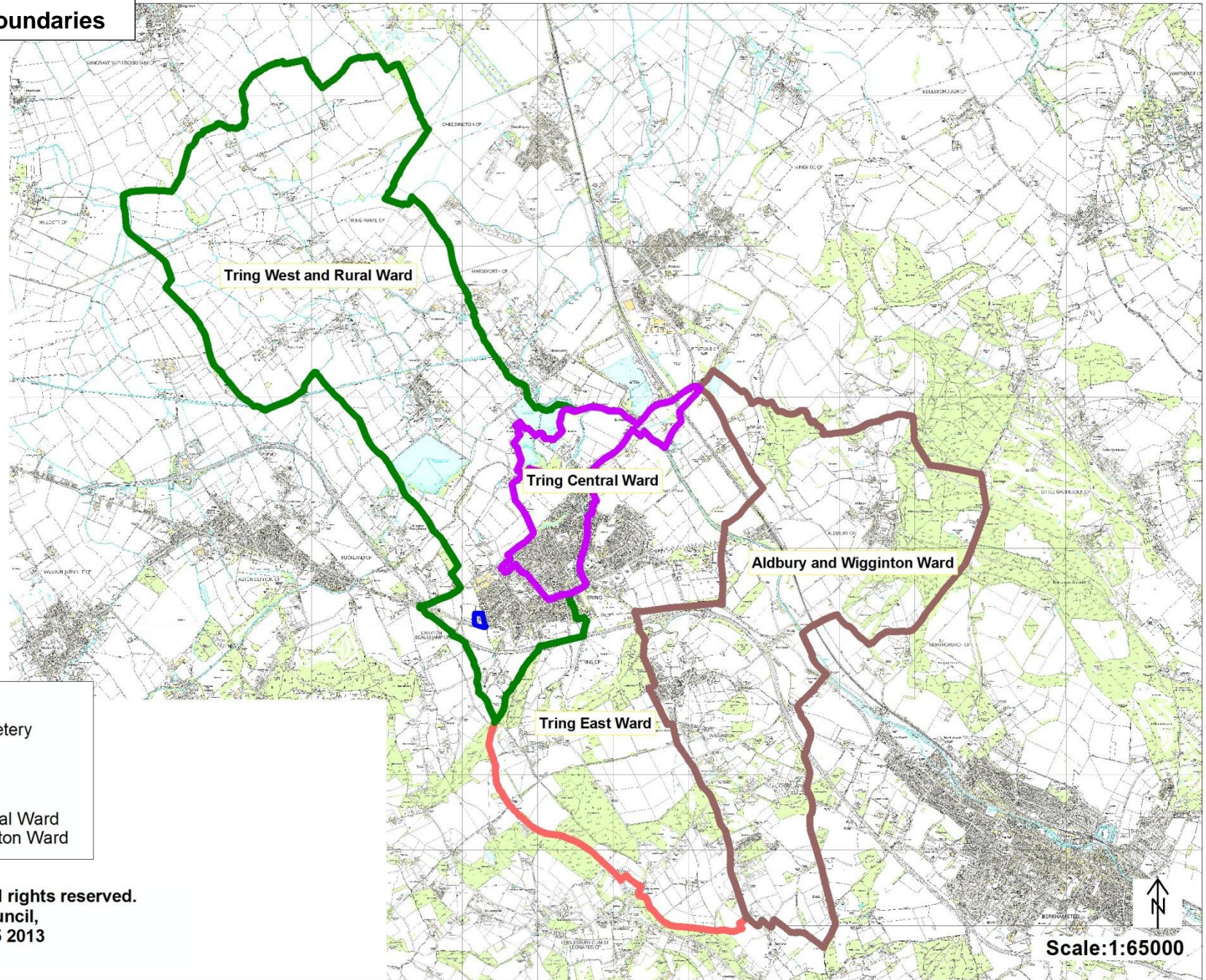
Tring Cemetery's burial records have not been checked to see where those buried in the cemetery in recent years lived at the time of their death. However, it is considered that the main area served by the cemetery consists of four wards, covering Tring itself and the nearby rural area within Dacorum (see Figure 2). The population of this area is 15,936 and the life expectancy is male 78.7 years and female 82.6 years (*Office for National Statistics, 2011 Census*).

Within the main area served by Tring Cemetery, it is estimated that there will be 40 burials a year in the future, calculated as follows:






Population of area	15,936
National mortality rate *	1%
Deaths in area per annum	159
% involving burial	25%
Number of burials	40

\* *Office of National Statistics 2011 Census*

**Figure 2: Ward boundaries**



**Key**

-  Existing Tring Cemetery
- Wards (2013)
-  Tring East Ward
-  Tring Central Ward
-  Tring West and Rural Ward
-  Aldbury and Wigginton Ward

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There are also a number of other factors that will affect the number of future burials at Tring Cemetery:

- As stated in section 2 above, there may be a trend away from cremation towards burials, including an increase in natural burials.
- Some local people will be buried in churchyards. The number of people buried in churchyards in the Tring area in recent years is not thought to be very high, but no actual figures are available. There is no reason to expect that the proportion of burials in churchyards will increase in the future.
- Some local people will be buried in cemeteries other than Tring.
- Any change in the local population will affect the number of deaths in the area. Over 600 additional homes are expected in the Tring area between 2006 and 2031. This is likely to result in a population increase of around 1,000 people, after taking account of forecast slight falls in average household sizes.
- Some people from outside the area will be buried in Tring Cemetery. Figure 3 shows that there is a large population within 30 miles of the cemetery, including a substantial part of London. Given the close proximity to London and the issues with lack of grave space there, the Council must consider the long range potential for increased usage from the capital. Although the Council levies a higher charge to any non-resident of Dacorum, it is often cheaper than the fees in some London Boroughs.
- The Council has adopted a more active stance in marketing its cemeteries. In particular, the Council is now engaging with user groups, such as funeral directors and memorial masons, and has produced information leaflets. This may lead to an increased number of burials from local residents and further afield. For example, in Bracknell the number of burials increased from 70 to 120 per annum following a marketing exercise.
- The Council will be improving the facilities at Tring Cemetery during 2015, by installing a rose garden (for scattering cremation remains) and individual burial niches for cremation remains.
- A new cemetery or a well-designed extension to an existing cemetery will improve customer experience and satisfaction. This often attracts additional custom from people who had not considered burial.
- Death rates are expected to increase, partly because the impact of the Second World War on rates is now much reduced (the high number of deaths in the war has resulted in lower death rates than would have otherwise occurred in recent years).

It is difficult to quantify the overall impact of the above factors on the future number of burials in Tring Cemetery. In the circumstances, it would be appropriate to

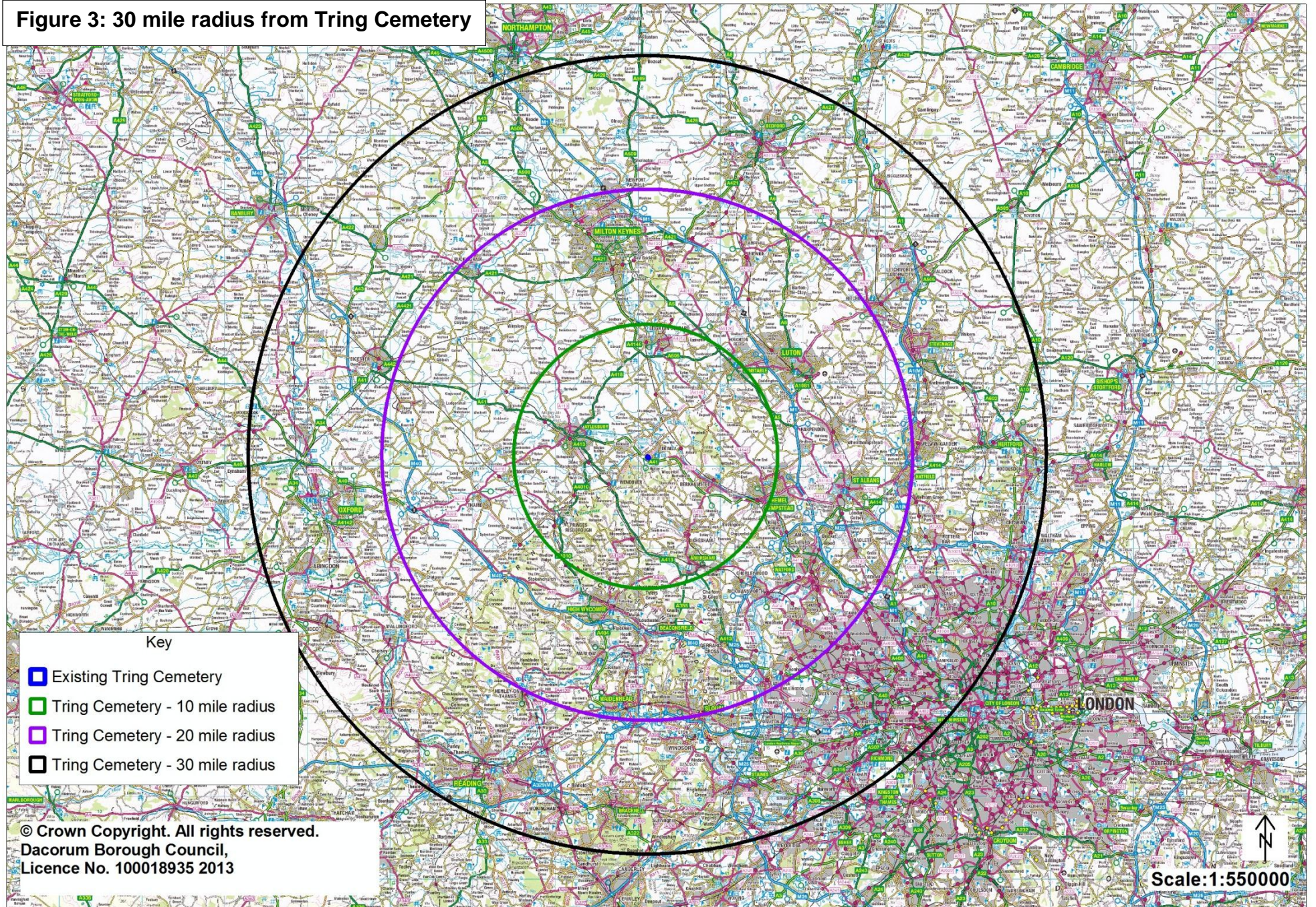
assume that future rates of full burials and burials of cremation remains will be broadly similar to recent rates. Therefore, the following rates are assumed:

- New graves for full burials: 20 per annum (marginally higher than the existing rate of 18 per annum)
- New graves for cremation remains: 17 per annum

However, in view of the above points, it is thought that these assumptions are cautious and that the numbers of burials may be considerably higher.



Figure 3: 30 mile radius from Tring Cemetery





In addition, it is important to note that when a burial space in a cemetery becomes limited, the amount of pre-purchased graves tends to increase. Therefore, a cemetery effectively becomes full at an earlier date than would otherwise be the case. This is likely to occur at Tring Cemetery, unless additional burial space is made available in the fairly near future.

**Issue 3: How soon is the existing cemetery likely to be full?**

The table below suggests that Tring Cemetery is likely to run out of space for full burials in about 23 years and for cremation remains in around 13 years:

	Remaining plots	New plots used per annum	Years supply (rounded)
Full burials	457	20	23
Cremation remains	219	17	13

However, the number of plots used per annum may be higher than indicated in the table (see Issue 2 above), so the cemetery may be full sooner.

**Issue 4: How many years land supply is required at Tring Cemetery?**

There is no Government guidance on how many years into the future cemetery providers should look when deciding how much land is required for new or extended cemeteries. Furthermore, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management confirmed to the Council in October 2013 that there is no general rule. The institute advised the Council that 50 years is the minimum land supply, but as much land as possible should be secured for future use.

Appendix 3 contains information on the approach that has been taken by a number of authorities around the country. Whilst different councils have adopted different approaches, it is clear that there is a generally accepted need to look several decades into the future in planning for cemeteries.

Dacorum Borough Council does not have a formal cemeteries strategy, but a draft strategy will be available by the end of 2015 and the finalised strategy by March 2016. The strategy will cover the 2016-2021 period. Although the strategy is still awaited, the Council's Bereavement Services Team Leader considers that 21 hectares (52 acres) of cemetery land is needed in Dacorum to meet needs for the next 100 years.

At Hemel Hempstead, Heath Lane Cemetery is full and Woodwells Cemetery is approaching capacity. Therefore, the Council has purchased a site of over 11 hectares (28 acres) at Bunkers Park in Leverstock Green for a new cemetery. This will meet the town's needs for around 100 years. Kings Hill Cemetery in Berkhamsted has space to last for another 80-100 years. However, the position is much less satisfactory in Tring, as can be seen from Issue 3 above. The Council would like to secure sufficient additional land to give the Tring area enough burial space for about 100 years.

### **Issue 5: How large should the cemetery extension be?**

As mentioned under Issue 4 above, the Council considers that there should be enough land to meet likely demand for about 100 years. There are a number of factors to consider when deciding how much land is needed to meet likely needs over this period of time, as shown in the table below:

Components of the extended cemetery	Estimated land area required
Full burials	<p>There will be an estimated 20 new graves a year for full burials at Tring cemetery and capacity in the existing cemetery is forecast to be exhausted in 23 years (see issues 2 and 3 above). To give a total land supply of 100 years, the extended cemetery needs to have sufficient land for 77 years at 20 plots per annum. This means that land for 1,540 graves is needed.</p> <p>Cemeteries can accommodate an average of 700-750 graves per 0.4 hectare (1 acre), but only if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the land is square or rectangular;</li> <li>• it is reasonably flat;</li> <li>• there are no trees;</li> <li>• there are no problems with ground conditions.</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, about 0.8-0.9 hectares is needed, but more than this if land is provided for natural burials (see below).</p>
Natural burials	<p>Natural burials take up more land than traditional burials in graves, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• natural burial only allows for single interment;</li> <li>• the interments must avoid trees and bushes, so the number of burials per acre reduces by approximately 25 - 30% (see Appendix 2).</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, cemeteries can accommodate about 500 natural burials per 0.4 hectares (1 acre). Due to bullet point 1 above, there is a high level of pre-purchasing of graves for natural burial, with people often purchasing two graves at the same time.</p> <p>It is impossible to predict future numbers of natural burials, but demand is likely to increase significantly. It is concluded that about 1 hectare of land is required in total for full burials, including natural burials.</p>
Cremation remains	<p>There will be an estimated 15 new graves a year for cremation remains at Tring cemetery and capacity in the existing cemetery is forecast to be exhausted in 13 years (see issues 2</p>



	<p>and 3 above). To give a total land supply of 100 years, the extended cemetery needs to have sufficient land for 87 years at 17 plots per annum. This means that land for 1,479 graves is needed.</p> <p>Cemeteries can accommodate an average of 1,200-1,500 cremation remains per 0.4 hectare (1 acre), subject to the same points as with full burials (see above). Therefore about 0.4-0.5 hectares is needed.</p>
<p>Car parking, access road and other facilities</p>	<p>As noted in section 1 above, there is no parking at present at the cemetery except for the cortege. Local residents in Donkey Lane (which is a private road) have complained about parking of vehicles by visitors to the cemetery. An average of 75-90 people attend burials, whilst the chapel seats 50 people. It is also necessary to take account of the parking requirements of disabled people and people visiting graves.</p> <p>Given the above, it is considered that at least 30 spaces and an access road should be provided.</p> <p>It is considered that the following facilities should either be provided next to the new car park or within the existing cemetery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public toilets to replace the sub-standard facilities next to the existing cemetery entrance; and</li> <li>• a small building for storage and office use, together with a small yard.</li> </ul> <p>A new road access will be required into the car park and other facilities.</p> <p>About 0.1 – 0.2 hectares of land will be needed for the car park, the other facilities (if included) and the access road.</p>
<p>Landscaping</p>	<p>Good landscaping within the cemetery extension or new cemetery will be required to provide an attractive and green environment. If additional burial space is provided on LA5, additional landscaping should take account of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the need for some screening between the expanded cemetery and adjoining existing and proposed new housing;</li> <li>• the site's location on the western edge of Tring, next to the main road into the town from Aylesbury; and</li> <li>• the need to avoid harming the special qualities of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (see Core Strategy Policy CS24 and saved Local Plan Policy 97).</li> </ul>

	<p>Also, there will be some land on the edges of the expanded or new cemetery which should be landscaped (i.e. land left over from the regular layout of graves and maintenance strips between rows of graves).</p> <p>It seems appropriate to allow 0.2-0.3 hectares for landscaping.</p>
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The above analysis indicates that an additional 1.6 – 1.8 hectares of land is needed, excluding the car park, road access and other facilities. The area required increases to 1.7-2.0 hectares if parking, access and other facilities are included. In the light of this calculation, the Council considers that at least 1.6 hectares should be made available for the cemetery extension or new cemetery, excluding parking, access and other facilities. Together with the remaining capacity in the existing cemetery, this would give a sustainable lifespan for the cemetery to meet the long term needs of the Tring area.

### **Issue 6: Where should the cemetery extension or new cemetery be located?**

In the light of the consideration of Issues 1-5, it is clear that there is a need for at least 1.6 hectares of additional burial space to meet the long term needs of the Tring area. There are different possible ways of achieving this:

- Option 1: extensions to the existing cemetery
- Option 2: detached cemetery extension in the western part of LA5
- Option 3: detached cemetery extension south of Aylesbury Road
- Option 4: completely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery

These options are examined below:

#### **Option 1: Extensions to the existing cemetery**

This option involves extensions to the north and west of the existing cemetery, within the proposed LA5 development area (see Figure 4). This land will be removed from the Green Belt in the Site Allocations document.

The northern extension in Option 1 involves a field (0.8 hectares) with clearly defined boundaries. Along the western side of this field there is a small area of scrub/copse which, with some sensitive landscape development, could be retained as a natural burial area.

In order to achieve an overall cemetery extension of 1.6 hectares, there should also be an extension of 0.8 hectares to the west of the existing cemetery. The western extension should include the car park, other facilities and access road referred to in Issue 5 above. Figure 4 shows a possible configuration of the western extension, but the extension could be wider and shorter than shown on this figure. For operational reasons, the extension should be rectangular in shape.

It is preferable to place graves in quiet, peaceful locations away from busy roads. Therefore, with Option 1 there should be no graves close to Aylesbury Road. The

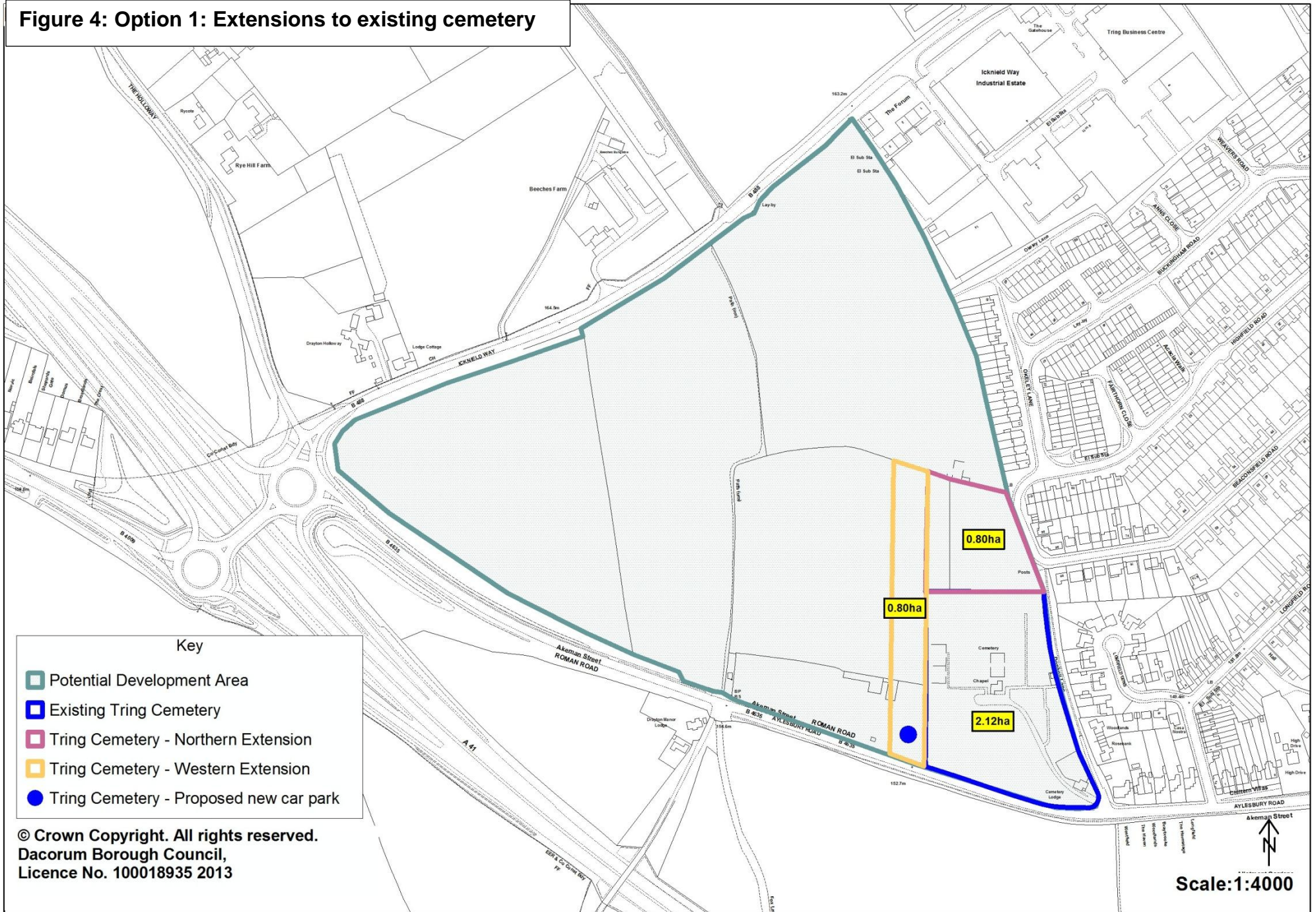
land immediately to the north of Aylesbury Road is the favoured location for the car park, other facilities and access road. A new footpath should provide a reasonably flat and short walk from the car park to the chapel.

With Option 1, there is a need now to set aside and hold land to extend the cemetery in the future, given that the land is to be excluded from the Green Belt. Failure to do this would mean there would be no land available for extensions when needed.

The advantages of Option 1 can be summarised as follows:

- It would be a logical extension, with clear links between the existing cemetery and the new areas.

**Figure 4: Option 1: Extensions to existing cemetery**



- It would provide a compact layout, which would look better aesthetically and would be convenient for visitors to the cemetery. This is an important point as cemeteries are valuable community facilities.
- The extensions to the cemetery would be consistent with planning policy, as they are within the part of LA5 to be excluded from the Green Belt and are not in the Chilterns AONB.
- This option has some operational advantages for the Council in terms of the management and maintenance of the cemetery (but there are also some operational disadvantages - see below).

The main disadvantage of Option 1 is that CALA Homes, the LA5 developers, are not willing to make 1.6 hectares of land available for extensions to the existing cemetery. They do not consider that it is reasonable to expect them to provide land to meet the need for burials 100 years into the future. Consequently, CALA are prepared to provide the northern extension (0.8 hectares) and a small western extension (about 0.2 hectares), to accommodate the access road, car park and other facilities.

There are also some operational disadvantages with Option 1. In particular, the presence of graves in the northern part of the existing cemetery means that it is not possible to provide a direct vehicle route into the northern extension. As a result:

- Hearses would not be able to get close to the graves, so coffins would have to be carried further.
- Memorial masons would have to move heavy granite gravestones on trolleys.
- Excavators used to dig graves in the northern extension would churn up the ground in wet conditions.

Another disadvantage of Option 1 is that the cemetery would be landlocked, so it could not be extended further when it is full.

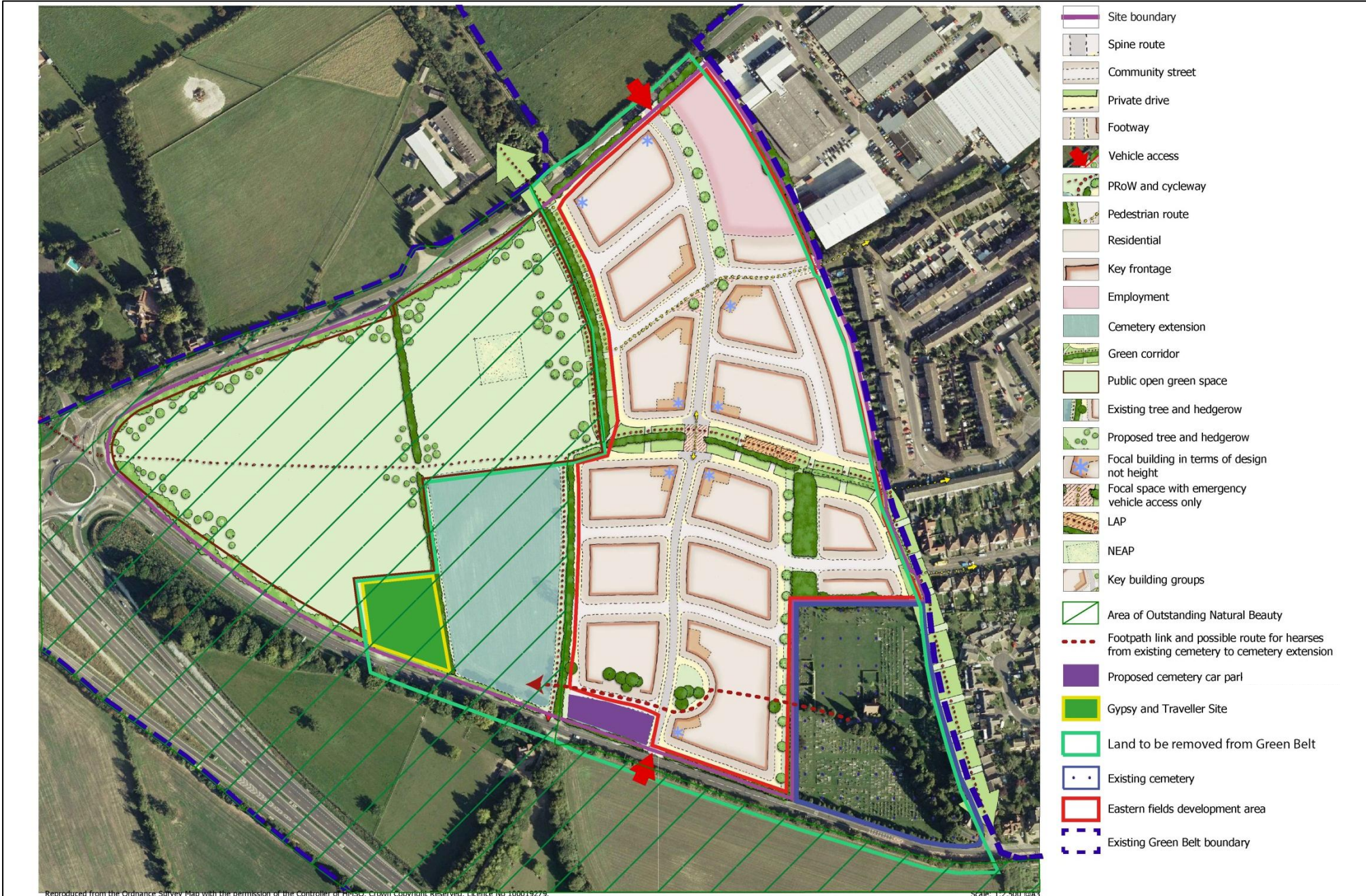
### **Option 2: Detached cemetery extension in the western part of LA5**

This option involves a cemetery extension of 1.6 hectares located immediately north of Aylesbury Road and west of the proposed LA5 development area (see Figure 5). The cemetery car park would be located within the development area, to the east of the cemetery extension.

CALA Homes are willing to make all this land available for cemetery use. Therefore, Option 2 has the considerable advantage of providing for long term burial needs in the Tring area. Another benefit is that it would mean that more homes could be built on LA5 than with Option 1. This is an important factor, given the Core Strategy Inspector's conclusion that the Core Strategy does not plan for the full objectively assessed need for housing in Dacorum.



**Figure 5: Option 2 Detached cemetery extension in the western part of LA5**



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However, there are a number of points associated with this option which should be taken into account, as explained below:

**1. Split site:** As the cemetery would be split between two sites, it would be less convenient for users. It should be borne in mind that many people visiting cemeteries are elderly. The disadvantage of having a split site would be reduced by providing a footpath link from the existing cemetery near the chapel into the new housing area. This link would form part of a direct pedestrian route of around 240 metres between the existing cemetery and the proposed extension.

**2. Operational difficulties:** There would be some operational difficulties for the Council in operating a split cemetery site. However, the Council's Bereavement Services Team Leader's view is that the operational problems would be no greater than with Option 1. Also, consideration should be given to making the pedestrian link (referred to in point 1 above) useable by hearses.

**3. Chilterns AONB:** With this option, the cemetery extension would be located in the Chilterns AONB. The proposal, therefore, needs to be assessed against the Council's planning policies for development in the AONB. The relevant policies are Core Strategy Policy CS24 and saved Policy 97 in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011. Policy CS24 states that the special qualities of the AONB will be preserved, whilst Local Plan Policy 97 provides more detailed guidance.

The Council attaches great importance to creating a green cemetery that blends harmoniously into the countryside. The site for the cemetery extension is already partly screened by the tree belt along Aylesbury Road and the existing hedgerows within the site. Further planting would be carried out to soften the impact of the cemetery extension. It is envisaged that a significant amount of land would be reserved for natural burials. Part of the area for natural burials would be planted with trees to mark graves and part would become a wildflower meadow. This should help to ensure that the cemetery extension does not cause serious harm to the AONB. Indeed, the AONB would be enhanced by the proposed new planting.

It is also worth noting that Option 2 would protect the AONB land from possible future pressure for housing development.

**4. Public access:** People would be allowed into the cemetery extension during reasonable daylight hours. Also, a pedestrian route(s) would be provided through the cemetery extension into the adjoining AONB land, which will become public open space as part of the LA5 proposals. This means that both the cemetery extension and the new public open space would form part of the overall LA5 green space.

**5. Green Belt:** The Option 2 site is currently in the Green Belt. In 2014, the Court of Appeal ruled in the Timmins case that cemeteries are 'inappropriate development' within the meaning of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is because NPPF paragraphs 89 and 90 are closed lists which identify the only categories of development which are 'not inappropriate'. These paragraphs do not list cemeteries, although new buildings providing appropriate facilities for cemeteries are classified as appropriate development.



In the light of the Timmins case, it is necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances to justify granting planning permission for a cemetery in the Green Belt (NPPF paragraph 87) or exceptional circumstances to justify excluding sites from the Green Belt in local plans (NPPF paragraph 83).

With Option 2, it is felt that the cemetery extension site should be excluded from the Green Belt in the Site Allocations document. Exceptional circumstances are considered to exist to justify this approach given:

- The need for a cemetery extension to serve the Tring area.
- There are no suitable non-Green Belt sites available.
- The proposed site is the most appropriate location for a cemetery extension large enough to meet the area's long term needs.
- All the proposed uses at LA5 that are inappropriate in the Green Belt (i.e. housing, employment development, cemetery extension and Gypsy and Traveller site) would be on land excluded from the Green Belt through the Site Allocations document, whilst the proposed public open space in the Western Fields would remain in the Green Belt.

**6. Suitability of ground conditions:** Paragraph 5.56 in the LA5 Draft Master Plan (September 2014) states that:

“Before this master plan is finalised, the Council will carry out a desk-based tier 1 survey to show whether this is an acceptable location to the Environment Agency for a cemetery extension. If necessary, a tier 2 survey involving on-site investigations, will also be carried out.”

The Council has now completed the tier 1 survey. This shows that the site is in a source protection zone 3, which means that a cemetery extension would not contaminate water supplies. Therefore, a tier 2 survey is not required. Despite this, boreholes will need to be dug to see if water comes in, but no problems are envisaged.

### **Option 3: Detached cemetery extension on the south side of Aylesbury Road**

This option involves a cemetery extension of 1.6 – 1.8 hectares on agricultural land immediately south of Aylesbury Road and west of the existing allotments (see Figure 6). A cemetery car park, road access and associated facilities (0.2 hectares) would also be provided.

In many ways, the pros and cons of Options 2 and 3 are broadly similar. Both options could meet the long term need for burial space and allow additional housing on LA5. In addition, points 1-4 above associated with Option 2 apply also to Option 3. This is because both options involve a split site, would cause some operational difficulties and are located in the AONB and Green Belt. However, Option 3 has some disadvantages compared with Option 2:





- Mourners visiting the chapel would have to cross the busy Aylesbury Road on foot (which would cause difficulties for some elderly mourners), or get back into a vehicle to travel to the graveside. This would be reflected in the Council's service impact assessment and the site specific equalities impact assessment.
- The need to cross Aylesbury Road would make the operational difficulties greater with Option 3 than with Option 2.
- It would be difficult to justify excluding the Option 3 land from the Green Belt, given its location in relation to the existing and proposed built up area. A cemetery development south of Aylesbury Road would, therefore, have to be justified on the basis of 'very special circumstances'.
- Given the above, Option 3 has not been discussed with the landowner, so it is uncertain whether a cemetery extension is deliverable in this location.

#### **Option 4: Completely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery**

In the light of the 'Dacorum Open Space Study' (March 2008), it is considered that existing open land in the Tring built-up-area should not be used for a new cemetery. Consequently, a new cemetery would have to be located in the Green Belt.

The conclusions on Tring in the Open Space Study include the following:

- Excluding Tring Park (a large informal recreation area), Tring has a deficiency of nearly 9 hectares of leisure space.
- A relatively large proportion of the open space in Tring is private sports clubs and schools. The provision of facilities for children and young people is below the Local Plan standard.
- Facilities on Miswell Lane recreation ground compensate to some degree for the lack of a local park in west Tring, and emphasise the importance of Local Plan proposal L4, which seeks an extension of the existing leisure space. The extension would enhance the usable space and make it large enough to qualify as a local park.

Locating an entirely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery would have some major disadvantages:

- It would involve far more expenditure by the Council to establish the new cemetery, as the facilities at the Aylesbury Road cemetery would have to be duplicated at the new site.
- The operational difficulties of operating two cemeteries in Tring would be much more severe than with a detached extension to the existing cemetery. For example, this would involve problems over storage and transportation of plant and materials and the staffing requirements for two sites.

- It would be less convenient for visitors who wish to visit graves in both cemeteries.

Given the above and the possibility of securing adequate burial space within LA5, Option 4 has not examined in depth.

### **Conclusions on Options 1-4**

The examination of Options 1-4 shows that there are serious disadvantages with Option 3 (detached cemetery extension on the south side of Aylesbury Road) and 4 (completely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery). These options should, therefore, be rejected and either Option 1 or 2 selected.

Option 1 (extensions to the existing cemetery) has some clear advantages, but would cause some operational difficulties. The main disadvantage of Option 1 is that CALA Homes, the LA5 developers, are not willing to make 1.6 hectares of land available for extensions to the existing cemetery.

There are a number of issues associated with Option 2 (detached cemetery extension in the western part of LA5), but also some advantages. The key point is that it would meet the long term need for burial space. In addition, it is a deliverable option and would not result in any serious problems that could not be mitigated or overcome. Accordingly, Option 2 is the Council's preferred option.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

From the examination of issues in section 3 of this paper, the following main conclusions can be drawn:

- Since 2008, there has been an annual average of 19 full burials in new graves and 17 burials of cremation remains at Tring Cemetery (Issue 1).
- It is assumed that future burials will be broadly similar to recent rates, with 20 full burials in new graves and 17 burials of cremation remains per annum. However, the number of burials may be considerably higher (Issue 2).
- Tring Cemetery is likely to run out of space for full burials in about 23 years and for cremation remains in around 13 years (Issue 3).
- The Council would like to secure sufficient additional land to give Tring Cemetery enough space to last for about 100 years (Issue 4).
- 1.6-1.8 hectares of land should be made available for the cemetery extension or a new cemetery. This reflects an assessment of land requirements for full burials (including natural burials), cremation remains and landscaping. A further 0.1-0.2 hectares are needed for car parking, road access and other facilities (Issue 5).
- There are four options for providing additional burial space in the Tring area:
  - Option 1: extensions to the existing cemetery;
  - Option 2: detached cemetery extension in the western part of LA5;
  - Option 3: detached cemetery extension south of Aylesbury Road;
  - Option 4: completely new cemetery away from the existing cemetery.

Options 3 and 4 have serious disadvantages, so should be rejected. Option 1 has some clear advantages, but would cause some operational difficulties. The main disadvantage of Option 1 is that CALA Homes, the LA5 developers, are not willing to make 1.6 hectares of land available for extensions to the existing cemetery. There are a number of issues associated with Option 2, but also some advantages. The key point is that Option 2 would meet the long term need for burial space. In addition, it is a deliverable option and would not result in any serious problems that could not be mitigated or overcome. Accordingly, Option 2 is the Council's preferred option (Issue 6).

## **5. FURTHER INFORMATION**

Additional reference material:

13<sup>th</sup> March 2015, BBC News, - *The world is running out of burial space*  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31837964>

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- 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015 – The Guardian – Death in the city: what happens when all our cemeteries are full? <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jan/21/death-in-the-city-what-happens-cemeteries-full-cost-dying>
- 29<sup>th</sup> September 2013, The Telegraph, - *Bodies 'buried in former car parks due to graves shortage'*.  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10337249/Bodies-buried-in-former-car-parks-due-to-graves-shortage.html>

For any further details or clarification please contact.

Alan Sheldon, Bereavement Services Manager, Dacorum Borough Council.

Direct dial - 01442 258064

Email – [alan.sheldon@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:alan.sheldon@dacorum.gov.uk)

John Chapman, Strategic Planning and Regeneration Officer, Dacorum Borough Council

Direct dial – 01442 228259

Email – [john.chapman@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:john.chapman@dacorum.gov.uk)

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS – EIGHTH REPORT, MARCH 2001**

The Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee has agreed to the following Report:

#### **CEMETERIES**

##### **Introduction**

1. In April, the Home Office Minister addressed the House of Commons on the vexed subject of burial policy. It was, he said, a subject that "was only exceeded in its importance by its difficulty." For this reason, no government action would be forthcoming.
2. The year was 1846, and just four years later, the same government was faced with a burial crisis of such proportions that it began to rush through an unthinking series of legislative enactments that ensured an effective short-term solution to the burial problems of the day, but left Britain with a disastrous long-term legacy. The combined Burial Acts established the principle that burial issues were a matter for local decision, leaving central Government with extremely limited responsibility and powers. The legislation also introduced a new commitment for cemetery providers: that once buried, human remains could never again be disturbed without special licence from the Home Office.
3. The cemetery as a wasting asset had been born. This was in contrast to developments on the Continent, where regulated systems of reuse ensured that existing cemeteries could continue to serve communities for unlimited generations; and was contrary to Britain's own tradition of churchyard reuse, which had been in place for centuries. Increasing acceptance of cremation in the UK through the twentieth century provided a temporary solution, of a sort, to the problems caused by the prevention of the reuse of graves. The pressure on dwindling cemetery resources was alleviated by cremation rates that exceeded fifty per cent during the 1960s. But complacency about the ability of the cremation rate to 'take the strain', combined with the lack of effective leadership at either central or local level, has meant that an impending burial crisis has been neither averted nor even anticipated. As a result Britain is now faced with the rapid diminution of burial space, in the context of an industry that faces a range of embedded management problems.
4. Many cemeteries are reaching or have already reached capacity. The threat this poses to the freedom for individuals to choose burial is already very real. The scope for providing new land for cemeteries conveniently sited to the communities they would serve is very limited. As burials go down, so does revenue and the budget for maintenance and a spiral of decline can be seen in many places as a result. The backlog of capital repairs is clearly enormous; thousands of memorials have been demolished and even now continue to be dismantled and laid down as unsafe.

5. And yet cemeteries have a potential lifeline in that they are designed to generate income via fees and burial charges. The future for these places, which form a significant piece of our national heritage as well as providing an essential service to local communities, need not be as gloomy, or reliant on subsidies, as it is for services which have no inherent potential for generating income.
6. In January 2001, giving evidence to this Committee about cemetery policy, the Home Office Minister Paul Boateng admitted that the Government needed to be 'more proactive', and himself set an agenda:

Issues concerning cemeteries are beginning, now, I think, to come to central government attention, around the problem of old, private cemeteries, the limitation of Home Office powers, the training and qualification of cemetery staff; the need to address environmental and cultural policy issues and the inflexibility of existing legislation. I am increasingly of the view that we ought now to look at the sufficiency and adequacy of powers and policy in relation to all those issues.

This report assesses the situation faced by cemeteries today, and defines those areas where action, by both central Government and others, is both imperative and expected.

## **Our Inquiry**

7. It was against this background of increasingly run down and decrepit cemeteries that we decided to conduct our inquiry. Our terms of reference were as follows:
  - The environmental, historical and cultural significance of cemeteries for local communities;
  - The condition of existing cemeteries;
  - The roles and responsibilities of the DETR, and other Government Departments and agencies, in the management and protection of cemeteries and public policy on cemeteries and crematoria;
  - Long-term planning for new cemeteries and burial space;
  - The management and provision of cemetery services;
  - The funding and economic viability of cemeteries, including funding from National Lottery distributing bodies;
  - Other matters arising in the course of questioning.

We received written evidence from over 120 organisations and individuals - testament in itself to the immense value set on cemeteries by our society. We followed this up with oral evidence over three sessions with witnesses

representing a wide spread of those involved with cemeteries and the provision of burial services. We also visited three cemeteries and a 'closed' churchyard in Newham. We are grateful to all those, both individuals and organisations, who contributed to our inquiry. We wish particularly to record our thanks to David Lambert, of the Garden History Society, and Julie Rugg, of the Cemetery Research Group at the University of York, who advised us on the subject. Their detailed knowledge of the subject was matched only by the enthusiasm with which they assisted us, and we are immensely grateful to them.

## **Cemetery Provision**

8. The provision of cemetery services and their management on a day-to-day basis is chiefly a matter for local authorities, although there are still a small number in private ownership. Central government responsibility for cemeteries (and crematoria) in England is shared. The Home Office is responsible for burial and cremation law, and related matters concerning the disturbance of buried human remains. The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) has responsibilities by virtue of the fact that most burial and cremation authorities are local authorities, and are organised and funded accordingly. The DETR also has an interest arising from land use and regeneration considerations and implications for environmental protection.
9. The Government told us:
  - Public policy in relation to cemeteries, and crematoria, is that their provision is a matter for local and commercial decisions in the light of demand. Regulation is light, and designed primarily to uphold the public interest in the decent disposal of the dead, to ensure that proper records are kept and preserved, to avoid public nuisance, and to protect buried remains from unnecessary disturbance. The regulation of municipal cemeteries also seeks to ensure uniform provision of the grant of burial rights and consistent arrangements for the maintenance of graves and memorials.
10. We have more to say about this 'hands-off' approach to cemeteries later in this Report. Throughout our inquiry, however, it was apparent that a lack of information is presenting a substantial obstacle to the development of public policy on cemeteries. We do not even know how many burial authorities there are, still less how many cemeteries. The number of denominational burial grounds in operation is unknown. There are no statistics on the amount of burial space available across the country, or how long that space is likely to last. No information is available about how cemeteries are run, or how many are operational and how many are closed. Little is known about the role of the private sector in delivering burial services. We do not know what condition our cemeteries are in - although evidence submitted to our inquiry paints what we believe to be a fairly accurate picture. Nor do we know precisely how many cemeteries are of historical or architectural importance, or where those cemeteries are.
11. We welcome the fact that, as a result of our inquiry, the dearth of information on the management and provision of cemetery services has been recognised by



Government. For this reason, we welcome the commitment given to us by the Home Office Minister to commission this year research, which should help to overcome this fundamental problem. This research programme should include the following:

- Locating all the operational burial authorities;
- Securing statistics on the amount of land currently in use, earmarked for future use, and disused;
- Collecting basic information on the management structures within which cemeteries are being run;
- Reviewing the condition of existing cemeteries.

Without all this information, policy formation cannot but be ineffective.

12. We believe that it is essential that Government address immediately the lack of basic information on the number, condition and operational viability of the country's cemeteries. We welcome the Minister's commitment to the collation of such information, and we recommend that the necessary research be set in train by the end of this year.

### **The Value of Cemeteries**

13. So why are cemeteries important? Recent events at Bedford and Alder Hey hospitals and elsewhere have shown the store, which our society still sets by the proper disposal of the dead. It is essential that this central purpose be borne in mind when discussing issues relating to cemeteries. However, the evidence we received for this inquiry shows clearly that the significance of cemeteries for local communities is far wider than this, embracing cultural, historical and environmental issues as well as educational and recreational uses.

### **The Needs of the Bereaved**

14. The principal purpose of cemeteries is to serve the needs of the bereaved. Although the desire to bury the dead is now, and has been for some time, a minority choice, we are firmly of the opinion that this preference should be respected. However, we heard evidence that suggested that in a number of places at present, and in particular in London, the bereaved are effectively denied choice because of the pressure on burial space and the condition of cemeteries.
15. The growth of cremation in the UK has meant that existing cemeteries have continued to be available to the diminishing number of people who wished to use them. It was suggested to us that further promotion of cremation as an option for the disposal of the dead would be the best means of avoiding the problem of the availability of space for burial.

16. We do not agree, however, that further promotion of cremation is desirable. Indeed, it is doubtful whether it is even possible. Current trends indicate a levelling-out of cremation rates in recent years at around 72 per cent. Witnesses argued that it was difficult to see what more could be done to promote cremation as an option. Dr Tony Walter, an author and Reader in Sociology at the University of Reading, told us:

- Cremation has been actively promoted in Britain for over 100 years and that active promotion has been continuing throughout that 100 years. If you look at the graph it was going up throughout the middle of the century and then it has tapered off. I am not quite sure what extra propaganda in favour of cremation one could produce.

It seems likely that there will always be a significant minority who will wish to be buried. To pressure the bereaved into considering cremation instead of burial would be to deny them the choice to which we believe they are entitled. Local authorities will, we suggest, wish to ensure the widest possible access to the option of burial. This means that ways have to be found to ensure that local, accessible burial space is provided. Local authorities should address this need in their Development Plans.

17. Burial space should not only be local and accessible, however, but also appropriately maintained and managed. It is easy to underestimate the importance of this point. Dr Peter Jupp, representing the Churches Group on Funerals, told us that:

- Research by Doris Francis, Leonie Kellaher and Georgina Neophytou has shown the enormous and unexpected use of burial grounds by people visiting their dead. Ten or 15 years ago scholars might have said that in Britain there was no cult of the dead. The research by Doris Francis and her team has shown that those who visit graves are far more numerous than we had ever expected, and therefore the role of the burial ground in enabling people to come to terms with their loss, or of celebrating the identity of someone who is dead, is an extremely important one.

18. The landscape and management of cemeteries should be appropriate to the purpose first and foremost of serving the bereaved. An environment, which feels safe and well cared-for, is essential. There exist many cemeteries where this is the case: West Ham Cemetery in Newham and the City of London Cemetery, which we visited during our inquiry, are good examples. Many cemetery managers are also now providing for particular needs in their cemeteries, for example by creating areas for burial of children and babies or of those from particular religious groups. The concept of 'green' or woodland burial was pioneered, we heard, by Ken West, bereavement services manager for Carlisle City Council, and is now being taken up by increasing numbers of other burial authorities and private sector operators. However, as we demonstrate below, the present condition of many cemeteries is far from appropriate to the purpose for which they are intended. Cemeteries, which are run down, crammed, overgrown and unsafe, do no service to the bereaved at a particularly vulnerable time in their lives.

19. We commend those cemetery managers who are looking to improve the service they offer to the bereaved and encourage all those with responsibility for cemeteries to consider further how they can follow their example. This should include ensuring that the public has access to good, impartial advice about the options available to them.

## **Cultural Value**

20. In emphasising the importance of the needs of the bereaved when considering matters relating to cemeteries, it becomes clear that cemeteries are not just places for the dead, but also for the living. The Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management said:

- Cemeteries are not properly appreciated as places for the living, more as places for the burial of the dead. However, this is recreation in its literal sense, refreshing the spirit of visitors so that they are better able to meet the demands and obligations of life. This is most important for the bereaved but many others may seek the solace of cemeteries for quiet contemplation and relief from stress. Cemeteries should be places of stillness and tranquility where the landscape and natural elements help us to understand their own lives whilst revering those lives which preceded us.

It was suggested to us that, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cultural ambivalence regarding the status of the dead and their disposal led to the gradual devaluing of the place of burial. Increasingly, however, it seems that people are setting more store by memorialisation. Ken Worpole, a writer and researcher on urban parks and cemeteries, noted the rising trend for people to leave wreaths and flowers at the site of a local accident, murder, or other untoward fatality. We ourselves saw at the City of London cemetery how people are taking to decorating graves, even with Christmas decorations. There is an increasing public desire for greater memorialisation of the dead which cemeteries, properly maintained and managed, can play an essential role in fulfilling. One interesting suggestion which was made to us was that one day a year - perhaps All Souls Day - be nominated as an occasion when people undertook to take care of their local burial grounds and cemeteries.

21. Cemeteries also have a broader significance for local communities. Corfe Castle Parish Council wrote:

- Whilst all cemeteries will clearly hold a special significance for those with loved ones buried in them, our cemetery also has a cultural significance for the local community as a whole. It records generations of local families and provides the direct link between those living in the village today and those of past times. Additionally, local people who have been forced to move away because of lack of affordable housing still have a tangible link, through past generations buried in the cemetery, with the local community.

This goes as much for the city as it does for rural villages. The Garden History Society wrote:

- Cemeteries are landmarks which contribute to local distinctiveness and cultural identity, and they are often an invaluable part of the local natural heritage, preserving as they do oasis-sites in generally highly developed areas of towns and cities. Above all, working cemeteries - and most Victorian cemeteries are still open - are a living heritage, embodying a continuum with the past, by virtue of still being used for burials. It is essential to recognise their local cultural importance, as physical components of the urban landscape, as repositories of collective memory and civic identity, and for the role that death rituals play in the spiritual quality of life of our towns and cities.

Yet, as the Garden History Society goes on to note, this significance is seldom recognised. Local cultural strategies, we were told, rarely, if ever, take cemeteries into account. We recommend that local authorities pay more attention to the cultural significance of their cemeteries.

### **Historical, Environmental and Amenity Value**

22. Calderdale MBC's memorandum sets cemeteries not only in their historical context, but outlines how cemeteries were viewed when they were first conceived:

As well as being a major social benefit, these cemeteries were also seen as major civic amenities on a par with parks, libraries, art galleries and museums, and with the same recreational and educational implications. They were the joint products of landscape design, architecture and sculpture and provide a valuable insight into the attitudes and beliefs of our Victorian ancestors. Often planted with specimen trees and shrubs, they were not only practical solutions to provide resting places benefiting the status of the departed, but were also designed to cultivate the intellect with their botanical riches and variety of monuments, whose morally uplifting inscriptions would also be educational and civilising. In terms of writing the social history of a town, the cemetery should be seen on a par with all the other Victorian developments, such as mills, town halls and public parks.

Similarly, the Garden History Society, setting out in more detail the principles which lay behind 19th-century cemetery design, quote J. C. Loudon from his book *On the laying out, planting and management of cemeteries*:

a general cemetery in the neighbourhood of a town, properly designed, laid out, ornamented with tombs, planted with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, all named, and the whole properly kept, might become a school of instruction in architecture, sculpture, landscape-gardening, arboriculture, botany, and in those important parts of general gardening, neatness, order and high keeping.

23. Whilst some of the more didactic elements of Victorian cemetery design might not be considered entirely appropriate to 21st-century Britain, nevertheless cemeteries retain many of the qualities which the Victorians considered important and which sit alongside and complement their primary purpose as

places for the service of the bereaved. In some cases, this includes the original features of the cemetery, such as the 'tree trails' of the City of London Cemetery which guide visitors around the many varieties of tree species planted by the original designers; or the geological walk in Rochdale cemetery which follows a line of pillars made from different types of stone taken from across the British Isles. In others, the original instructional purpose of cemeteries is being revived as schools use them as an educational resource.

24. The Victorian concept of the cemetery as a place for retreat and contemplation is also just as valid today as it was when they were laid out. As our towns and cities have grown, and development has taken place around the out-of-town sites where cemeteries were originally situated, they have taken on an important role in terms of urban green space. Hounslow council wrote:

Environmentally, cemeteries are, or can be, places of great beauty and interest, an oasis, making them a welcome relief from the busy world outside ... These places of beauty are viewed as supplementary lungs of our towns and cities, particularly with the advance of the built environment.

#### *The historic importance of cemeteries*

25. The historic interest of cemeteries is multi-faceted. They are important as historic landscapes, as collections of historic buildings and as documents rich in social and cultural history. As landscapes, they have been called, along with urban parks and hospital grounds, "one of the three great innovations in public landscape in the nineteenth century". Faced with the critically unsanitary condition of urban burial grounds in the early-mid nineteenth century, the Victorians seized the opportunity not merely to establish the necessary spaces for burial but to create ornamental landscapes of the highest order. The Ancient Monuments Society states that "It is worth remembering too that cemeteries were set up not just to bury the dead but to stir the Muses among the living." Fiona Green, a landscape historian, quotes John Strang's *Necropolis Glasguensis* (1831):

A Garden Cemetery is the sworn foe to preternatural fear and superstition. A Garden Cemetery and monumental decorations are not only beneficial to public morals, to the improvement of manners, but are likewise calculated to extend virtuous and generous feelings. They afford the most convincing tokens of a nation's progress in civilization and in the arts. The tomb has, in fact, been the great chronicler of taste throughout the world.

26. Apart from the landscapes, cemeteries contain one of the nation's most significant collections of memorial sculpture and funerary buildings. Dr Chris Brooks of the Victorian Society wrote that "the cemetery buildings created during the great period British cemetery design - from the 1820s to the early decades of the twentieth century - make a richly varied, distinctive and often distinguished contribution to the country's historic architecture." The Ancient Monuments Society said that together with churchyards, cemeteries "provide

the country's single greatest legacy of vernacular art of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries." The damage inflicted on cemeteries as revenues fell and maintenance problems grew is well documented by Dr Brooks, who summarises the post-war decades thus:

between the 1950s and early 1980s, extensive damage was inflicted on historic cemeteries. Numerous chapels, no longer used for burial services, have been destroyed; lodges have also gone, catacomb ranges have been sealed, and boundary walls have been dismantled.

Although Dr Brooks identifies a reduction in wholesale destruction in the past fifteen years, the management problems of which we heard clearly remain enormous.

27. The national historic importance of cemeteries is reflected to some extent in the listing of some 2286 buildings and monuments in cemeteries, and the presence of 26 cemetery landscapes in the English Heritage *Register of parks and gardens*. But they are equally of irreplaceable importance to the local heritage and environment. As the Ancient Monuments Society said, "they are an invaluable source for local history and local identity." Ms Sandra Hull wrote of her local cemetery in Boston, Lincolnshire, that the "fine collection of exotic trees" with which the cemetery was originally planted, remains "much treasured and admired." The Heritage Lottery Fund wrote:

Cemeteries evoke a sense of history and a sense of place. Cemeteries are also important places within the collective identity of families or communities, as they are often social documents to the past life of a locality expressed in a telling and memorable fashion. Quite apart from the personal memories they evoke, they are also a document, through the remains of those buried within them, to the lives and work, the social and economic history of past ages.

28. As a result, "cemeteries are vastly more interesting places than many urban parks." They represent "a diverse historical resource with tremendous educational potential." The mature Victorian landscapes with their buildings "add immeasurably to the urban landscape [and] still constitute designed landscapes of striking power and beauty." The great cemeteries of the United Kingdom "provide some of the most intense poetic and melancholy experiences that visitors can undergo."

#### *Nature conservation*

29. In many cases, cemeteries have also become an important focus for nature conservation, becoming wildlife havens and places where people can have safe and informative contact with nature. Cemeteries support a wide range of habitats, including relict grasslands, heath, ancient and secondary woodland, scrub, hedges, ponds and flushes, as well as more artificial features such as high maintenance lawns, stands of trees, ornamental flower beds, and shrubberies. In addition, buildings, monuments, tombs and headstones, made from a variety of rocks, can provide support for lichens, mosses and ferns, as well as providing geological interest. A large number of rare species of trees,

plants, fungi, invertebrates, reptiles, birds and mammals are found in cemeteries. Cemeteries are often designated as local Wildlife Sites, and sometimes as Nature Reserves. **Cemetery managers should evaluate the biodiversity potential of their cemeteries, and where appropriate, and in consultation with local Wildlife Trusts and other interested parties, manage the cemetery accordingly.**

30. However, it is important to note, with cemeteries as with parks, that management of an area for nature conservation can be every bit as demanding as it would be were it managed in the same way as the rest of the cemetery. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was keen to stress that conservation must not be confused with neglect. A neglected cemetery does not become a haven for flora and fauna. A narrow range tends to dominate, eg self sown sycamores, brambles and even undesirable species such as knotweed, to the exclusion of much else of value. True conservation requires just as much if not more management as the traditional style of cemetery maintenance. If cemeteries are not adequately maintained, memorials quickly deteriorate and in due course are totally lost due to damage by trees, ivy etc. The value of a cemetery in terms of its history, heritage and environment is lost just as much as if its land had been used for commercial development.

**Management of a cemetery for nature conservation purposes must not become an excuse for neglect.**

31. The role of cemeteries in nature conservation has been promoted by the "Living Churchyard and Cemetery Project", based at the Arthur Rank Centre. The aims of the project are:
- To enhance wildlife and its habitat in all kinds of burial grounds through conservation management;
  - To preserve burial grounds as essential elements of the historic landscape and to promote their recognition as such;
  - To create an atmosphere of benefit to grieving visitors and to promote community based action for the environment;
  - To encourage educational use of burial grounds;
  - To aid the understanding of our natural and cultural heritage and its importance in God's creation;
  - To enhance the amenity of burial grounds.

The Living Churchyard and Cemetery Project was complimented by several of our witnesses, including English Nature, the Government's statutory adviser on nature conservation issues. The project seems to have been very successful in regenerating rural churchyards and burial grounds, and in promoting churchyards and cemeteries as an educational resource. Sadly, however, it appears to have stalled because of lack of funding. **We recommend that the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions consider ways in which the Living Churchyard and Cemetery Project can be enabled to continue and extend its good work in regenerating cemeteries and other burial grounds.**

## **APPENDIX 2: NATURAL BURIAL**

The interest and demand for natural burial (also called green or woodland burial) has grown in recent years, as an alternative option for people concerned about the potential environmental impacts of modern funerals. Interest in natural death has grown as people have become increasingly concerned about the emissions and fuel use associated with cremation, the use of stone for memorials (often shipped considerable distances from overseas quarries), or the use of formaldehyde for embalming, which has an adverse effect upon groundwater.

The first natural burial site was opened in 1993. There are now over 220 in the UK and many more at various stages of planning and development. Environmentally-friendly funeral provision is not only a logical extension of an environmentally aware lifestyle, but also has a broad appeal as an alternative to a conventional cemetery.

The Ministry of Justice's 'Natural Burial Grounds Guidance for Operators' (2009) document highlights the importance of a robust environmental policy providing information on:

- the environmental benefits anticipated for the scheme over a period of no less than 100 years;
- the current and future size of the site;
- where trees, shrubs or other plants are sourced and whether these are 'native';
- use of herbicides, chemicals, fertilisers, baits and any other substance that might impact on the environment;
- land management, e.g. frequencies of mowing, replacement of dead trees, when tree planting will take place, ultimate tree cover, pest controls, water features, protection of historic and archaeological features e.g. veteran trees;
- waste and litter disposal from the site and whether green waste is composted; and
- support and/or advice of local wildlife trusts, or other agencies involved in conservation and the environment.

The potential down side to this form of interment is that it is that the interments have to avoid the trees etc. therefore the burials per acre reduces by approx. 25 -30%.

The Ministry of Justice recommends in its guidance for operators of natural burial grounds that we should use a minimum of 100 years when calculating the anticipating the environmental benefits of the site.



## **APPENDIX 3: OTHER COUNCILS' APPROACH TOWARDS LONG TERM PLANNING FOR CEMETERIES**

### **Dereham Town Council**

Dereham Town Council carried out a feasibility study for the towns' new cemetery based on 100 year capacity as burial land would potentially run out within five years. Housing developer Taylor Wimpey Homes submitted plans to build 200 houses on land to the west of Dereham Town Football Club's ground.

On the other side of the club's Aldiss Park home, a four-hectare plot of farmland has been allocated for use as a new burial ground. The developer has an option to build houses on both sites, but has made a formal agreement to surrender its option on the proposed cemetery if planning permission is approved for the new housing estate.

That would enable the plot to be purchased by Dereham Town Council, whose members agreed this week to seek consent from the Department of Communities and Local Government to borrow the money. The Town Council are currently in the design process at last minutes available from march meeting.

### **Oxford City Council**

Oxford City Council set aside a budget of £20,000 to investigate building the first new cemeteries in Oxford for more than 75 years, as only Wolvercote and Botley cemeteries had useable burial spaces. Both cemeteries are expected to be full by the end of 2020 therefore Oxford sought an area of land to provide sustainable burial well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Oxford City Council are currently looking to develop 7.2 hectares of land as a new cemetery which at current burial rates would offer sustainable burial provision for approx. 30 – 35 years. Oxford City council recognises that the proposed site does not offer the sustainability they would have liked, however, land is limited and this site does have potential to expand as it establishes.

### **Kidlington Parish Council**

Kidlington Parish Council has recently opened its new cemetery which is based on the burial needs of the town for 80 years.

The crisis of Oxfordshire's rapidly filling cemeteries has forced one parish council to buy a new burial ground.

Kidlington parish council, which has been looking for a cheap solution to the problem for a decade, has had to borrow £114,000 and use £60,000 of its own cash reserves to buy two-and-a-half acres of farmland off Bicester Road. Space has nearly run out at the village's existing cemetery at St Mary the Virgin Church, and the cemetery cannot be extended onto neighboring land due to its high water table.

Now the council is preparing to buy a new plot of land, currently owned by The Philip King Charitable Trust, to serve the village for another 80 years. It has submitted a planning application to Cherwell District Council.

Parish council clerk Tricia Redpath said: "It is getting very close to the point where we cannot take new burials at the existing burial ground.

"We are hoping that if we get planning permission for this it will be available next year, because we could run out of new burial plots by then.

"We have really taken it to the wire, but it has taken years to get to this stage." She said ashes could still be taken to the Garden of Remembrance, built two years ago.

The council will borrow £114,000 from the Public Works Loan Board over 15 years to fund the project.

Parish councilor Chris Pack said: "Providing burial grounds is one of the few statutory duties that parish and town councils have, and we have been aware of the problem and the need to expand for some years.

"We have been salting away money into our reserves, but did not expect to pay as much as we are having to for the new site.

"We thought at one stage we would be able to expand the existing cemetery, but when the boreholes were dug, it became clear that wouldn't be possible."

### **Bicester Town Council**

In January 2011 Bicester's Town Council warned that its only cemetery could be full within 18 months.

A plan to extend the cemetery behind St Edburg's Church, in Church Street, has been thwarted after an electricity grid cable was found under the proposed extension site at Pringle Field. The estimated £30,000 cost to move the cable was too much. The existing cemetery has 4,475 burial and cremation plots. There are just 54 single, four double and 63 cremation plots left.

The extension would have provided an extra 60 plots. Moving a fence around the site would cost another £10,000 to £20,000 but Miss Pickford said this, added to the cost of moving the cable, put the likely final bill beyond the council's resources.

Another cemetery is planned as part of the 5,000-home eco-town on the north-western edge of the town, but there are fears this will not be ready before St Edburg's is full. The council is looking to negotiate a 10 acre site to provide burial which would provide well over 100 year burial at the current burial rate, however the population is estimated to rise by 18,000 during the next 20 years of development in the area.

Bicester Town Council plans to meet P3Eco, the consortium behind the eco-town project, to press for land to be allocated as soon as possible for a new cemetery. However, the organisation would not be drawn on when land would be available.

The eco-town project is a phased project, which could take up to 30 years to complete. A planning application has been submitted by P3Eco to Cherwell District Council for the first phase of the eco-town. This would create 394 homes, a pub, shops, office accommodation a primary school

Residents may then have to be buried elsewhere.

### **Llaniestyn Cemetery, in Llanddona, Anglesey**

Plans for hundreds of much-needed burial plots in a village left with nowhere to bury its dead have raised hopes that the crisis can be resolved.

But others have warned of further delays as the county council attempts to secure the necessary land.

An application before Anglesey council's planning committee tomorrow proposes using agricultural land to create 311 additional plots at the Llaniestyn cemetery in Llanddona on Anglesey.

But there are warnings it will take months for the plans to become reality as the council seeks a compulsory purchase order for the land.

The village has been trying for years to have a new cemetery built and now has nowhere left to bury its dead – with the council accused of “dragging its heels” over the burial crisis.

County councilor Carwyn Jones said: “We are now at the stage where there is no resting place for the people of Llanddona and Llaniestyn within their village, which is totally unacceptable. It's disgraceful that we have reached the stage where people at the end of their lives are worrying about whether they can be buried in the village where they live.”

Despite an extension to the cemetery 30 years ago, residents face being buried in Llansadwrn or Llangoed due to the lack of space, said Cllr Jones.

He added: “This hasn't happened overnight. The community council has been trying tirelessly to get an extension on the Llaniestyn cemetery for the past 10 years and, since becoming county councillor in May, I have added my weight to the cause. The council has dragged its feet and should now work with Anglesey's community councils to make sure this doesn't happen elsewhere. I urge the local authority to make an audit of Anglesey's cemeteries so that nobody else has to face this problem.

“I have three generations of my family resting in Llaniestyn cemetery and there is no way I will let this issue go until the people of Llanddona get their wish.”

Planning officers have recommended approval of the plans, which also include 10 car parking spaces, a stone wall, ornamental steel gates and pillars.

A council spokesman said: "Planning consent is a necessary component of the process as we seek a compulsory purchase order. It would not be appropriate to comment on the legal aspects of this matter."

*BBC News, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2013, Lack of Burial Space at Llanddona.*

### **Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council**

The predicted cost of Newcastle's replacement cemetery has risen by 27 per cent to more than £2.6 million.

A new 'realistic' estimate for the cemetery's chapel and visitor centre, which has only recently become available, is the main reason for the increase on the £2.1 million bill calculated in 2004. Inflation has also played a part.

The new cemetery, to be built on land off Keele Road, Keele, is needed to replace Newcastle Cemetery, where burial space is expected to finally run out by September 2009. The plans, so far, are said to remain on schedule.

Newcastle Borough Council's cabinet has now approved the detailed design for the scheme, including the chapel, although members expressed reservations over the building's external appearance.

Cabinet member Mary Maxfield said: "Since the cemetery was originally costed, the price has gone up considerably. From 2004 to the present date there has been 15.5 per cent inflation, and there are also higher construction industry costs and the cost of the compulsory purchase order for the site.

"But the big difference is the cost of the combined office, chapel and visitor facility." The estimated cost of the building had originally been £480,000. But this has more than doubled.

Other major expenses include land acquisition, site services such as water and electricity, and roads and paths.

Cabinet members agreed to approve Mrs Maxfield's proposal to assign a project manager to oversee the scheme until it is completed.

The design for the chapel and visitor centre has cladding on its external walls – a feature most cabinet members felt would age badly, especially considering how long the building will be expected to last.

Council Leader Simon Tagg said: "I think a more suitable material should be used. I'd particularly like to see stone used, as is in a lot of buildings in Keele.

"This is going to be there for 100 years, and it should reflect the heritage of the local area."

The borough council is in the process of securing a compulsory purchase order for a portion of the site which is privately owned.

If the landowner appeals against the order it could prompt a public inquiry, which may take months to resolve.

But the council is looking to press ahead with the first phase of the scheme, encompassing highway access, buildings and 30 years of burial space, on the land it already owns, meaning the CPO process should not lead to delays.

The council owns 12 acres and has CPO an additional 32 acres of adjacent farm land.

Mr Tagg added: "I think the fact that we will have a project manager overseeing the development, and that this will be solely under our control, will mean that we won't see the problems that led to the situation with the Sports Village."

Cabinet members agreed that provision should be made for the £565,000 increase in the authority's General Fund Capital Programme.

The councilors also agreed to approve the design, but with the external facings of the building being subject to review following a site visit by the planning committee.

*The Sentinel, Shock New Price for Cemetery, 25<sup>th</sup> July 2008*