

Culture, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	10 September 2013
Title:	Priest End Burial Space
Purpose of the Report:	To receive an update on the ground investigation and to agree the next steps.
Contact Officer:	Rob Goss, Project Officer

Background

The area of land currently used as allotment space at Priest End was acquired with the intention of extending the existing churchyard at St Mary's into it. In order to do this a change of use planning order is required. The Environment Agency (EA) is a consultee in this process and will not give their support to the scheme until it is established that the water table is deep enough to not allow associated pollution to affect the water table.

The ground investigation contractor carried out ground investigations to establish the water level. The results indicate that the water table level is adequate in some areas of the plot, but in other areas it is too high for the EA to approve. It is likely that half to three quarters of the land is suitable to use. However, to establish an approved boundary further monitoring will be required.

A method statement has been prepared by the contractor and agreed by the EA detailing the proposed way forward; this requires a minimum of three extra sampling bore holes to be made at agreed locations in the area. Dependant on the water table level in these areas up to a maximum of seven additional bore holes may be required to accurately establish the boundary line. Once the first three bore hole levels have been obtained a judgement will be made by the EA, the contractor and Thame Town Council as to whether the additional bore holes are required.

Monitoring preferably needs to be carried out when the water table is high. The previous investigation bore holes are still in-situ, levels can be derived at their highest level, however the higher the water table at the time of carrying out the investigation the more validity the results will have.

To date the council has spent £3,185 on groundwater investigations on the site and although the EA have approved a method statement allowing for three extra holes, they are under no obligation to approve any area if the results are not favourable.

Risk Assessment

<i>Risks</i>	<i>Controls</i>
The Town Council carries out further investigation, but the change of use application is unsuccessful.	Close monitoring with the EA and contractor after the data from the first three bore holes has been obtained.

Allotment holders, unwilling to vacate site.	Allotment holders notified of intended use in 2011 and are aware of current situation regarding the issues surrounding the water table. Most Allotment holders have vacated the site. The remaining allotment holders updated once ground investigation is complete.
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Resource Appraisal

Further investigations:

The minimum number of bore holes required is three, the contractor has a mobilisation cost of £100, and each extra bore hole will cost an additional £95. A minimum cost would therefore be £385. Dependent on the results obtained in the field further bore holes may be required which could be bored immediately to further substantiate the water table level in specific areas. There is no limit to the number of additional bore holes that the EA could request, but it would be unlikely that they would request more than 10. To avoid further delay these additional costs have been included in the figure below.

Company	Description	£
GMD	Further ground investigation works	£1150
SODC	Change of use planning application	£200

Legal Powers

Open Spaces Act 1906, ss 9 and 10: Local Government Act 1972, s214

RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL:

- i) To authorise expenditure of up to £1150 for further site investigation work to be funded from the Capital Revenue budget.***
- ii) To authorise expenditure for a change of use planning application up to £200 to be funded from the Capital Revenue budget.***