

Full Council

Date:	19 January 2021
Title:	Burial Space
Contact Officer:	Andrea Oughton, Asset Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To agree in principle that, subject to planning approval, the Town Council take on ownership and management responsibilities for the new burial space off Thame Park Road.

Background

2. Land to the south of Wenman Road (Site C) was allocated in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan for delivery of 187 homes. The site has now been built and occupied. As part of granting permission, Schedule 4 of the Agreements requires the submission of a planning application for a burial space. This requirement originates from the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Policy ESDQ5.
3. In May 2016 Nexus Planning, working on behalf of Taylor Wimpey (TW) and CEG the two parties in control of the site, wrote to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) confirming that the Groundwater Assessment report had been finalised and that TW and CEG were discussing outcomes and potential burial space locations within the Burial Space Investigation Area with the Town Council.
4. Nexus Planning met with the Town Council in July 2016 to discuss the Groundwater Assessment outcomes. The Town Council confirmed its preference for the burial space to be located adjacent to Thame Park Road.
5. In August 2017 a formal pre-application submission was made to SODC who raised no issues with the proposed location.
6. The Town Council met with TW, CEG and Nexus Planning in April 2019 to discuss progress. The Town Council continued to raise concern over the extent to which the proposed burial space design and layout worked from a management and operational perspective. Until clarity was provided the Town Council confirmed it would be unable to commit to taking on ownership and management of the burial space.
7. TW appointed Cemetery Development Services (CDS) to review the burial space plans and prepare a management report (Appendix 1). The report made a number of recommended changes to the original proposed plans to ensure the burial space worked from an operational and management perspective.
8. TW and Nexus Planning met with the Town Clerk and Asset Manager in March and July 2020 to discuss the CDS Management Report and agreed a number of minor changes.
9. An update on the progress of the burial space was given at a meeting with the District Council's s106 Officer in October 2020. The s106 Officer indicated SODC were happy to raise 'A Deed of Variation' to allow the Town Council to take on the ownership, operation and management of the burial space.

10. The Burial Space Working Group met in November 2020 and agreed the proposed plans subject to a few minor changes.

Next Steps

11. The Town Council agrees, in principle, to take on ownership and management responsibilities of the burial space. This will provide confidence for Nexus Planning to formally submit the planning application (Appendix 2 - proposed layout). On granting of permission TW and CEG will commence development of the new burial space.
12. In parallel with the planning application being submitted SODC will draw up a 'Deed of Variation' to allow the burial space, once completed and signed off to be handed to the Town Council. To be brought to a future Full Council meeting for discussion / approval.

Resource Appraisal

13. The provision of burial space operated by the Town Council will give residents a choice of non-consecrated / different faith / green burials, etc.
14. Town Council Officers to attend cemetery management training to ensure effective management of the space. Funding will be from existing training budgets.
15. Management plan to be drawn up and approved to ensure smooth and efficient running of the site.
16. The Maintenance Team to maintain the site. It is not anticipated, in the first few years that there will be a need to increase the capacity of the Maintenance Team or purchase additional equipment. This may need to be reviewed as and when burial numbers significantly increase.
17. Income received from the site via burial fees and charges.

Risk Assessment

18. The extension of St Mary's churchyard has lessened the urgency to find new burial space within the parish. Provision of the new burial site will further increase capacity.
19. No previous knowledge of managing cemeteries. Staff to attend relevant trainings and keep up to date with current guidance and legislation.
20. Insufficient funds to operate burial site. Management plan (including financial management) adopted.

Legal Powers

- Open Spaces Act 1906 ss 9&10;
- Local Government Act 1972 s214.

Recommendation:

- i) To agree in principle that, subject to planning approval, the Town Council take on ownership and management responsibilities for the new burial space off Thame Park Road.***