

HALL ROAD CEMETERY EXTENSION - PREPARATION OF A DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report looks at the options for developing the cemetery extension at Hall Road, and sets out a timescale for the development proposals. The report aims to identify the key objectives for the extension and the timescale over which the development will take place in order to set an opening date for the extension.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Having purchased the land for the cemetery extension to the rear of the existing Hall Road cemetery, it is now necessary for a detailed brief to be prepared setting out the objectives to be met to ensure the new cemetery facility is appropriately developed and available when the current area reaches its capacity.

3 CURRENT THINKING ON CEMETERIES

- 1.1 The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has very recently stated that “Cemeteries should not be considered solely as resting places for the dead, they should be designed with the living in mind too. The great Victorian Cemeteries were designed and maintained as beautiful public parks for the enjoyment of all. Every local authority should have them in their green space strategy and ensure their full value is realised.”
- 1.2 Rochford District is proud of its green status, and the opportunity to use this land as part of the open space portfolio should not be lost, especially as not all the land will be brought into use in the short term.
- 1.3 The following objectives are taken from the guidance for the Cemetery of the Year Awards organised by the Memorial Awareness Board and sponsored by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and the National Association of Memorial Masons.
- 3.4 Although the proposed cemetery will not be aiming to enter the award initially, the guidance does provide useful information gained across a broad spectrum of experience on what constitutes an excellent cemetery, and will lead perhaps to some national recognition of the quality of the cemetery.

4 OBJECTIVES FOR THE CEMETERY EXTENSION

- 4.1 The following list sets out the main objectives that a cemetery should meet:-
- The provision of a range of options for burials that will meet the expectations of the Community for the foreseeable future.

- The provision of an appropriate setting for burials of deceased persons, and crematoria memorials.
- The provision of a peaceful and welcoming place for people to visit their loved ones.
- The cemetery respects its location.
- The opportunity is taken to provide a haven for wildlife as the land is returned from farming to a more natural habitat.
- Appropriate facilities are provided for the comfort of those people visiting the cemetery.
- The cemetery is well maintained and a safe place to visit.
- Opportunity is taken to improve and extend existing facilities to cover both the existing cemetery and the new extension.
- The land not initially occupied as a cemetery be used in an appropriate fashion so as to keep it in good maintenance for the future development of the site, and as a useful open space during the intervening time.

4.2 The following list identifies the key elements of a welcoming cemetery: -

- Clear display of the cemetery name at entrance and with sign posting on approach to the Cemetery.
- Good and safe access to the site and within the grounds.
- Easy access and parking near graves and areas frequently visited, including, where appropriate, level and hard surface paths for those with disabilities.
- Attractive entrance area and work areas kept neat and tidy, with gates and/or screening.
- Provision of information relating to the site, including: informative and attractive notice boards with site plan, opening times, the maintaining authority and emergency contact details in a prominent position, literature and signage.
- Access to public telephones (detailed on signposts) in the event of an emergency or when visitors need to contact office staff.
- Reasonable opening hours to suit the public and ongoing work towards providing the best service for the local community.

5 SAFETY AND SECURITY

- 5.1 Cemeteries and Crematoria grounds should be safe and secure for everyone who uses them. It will be necessary to implement a management plan on safety, maintenance and memorial safety. Appropriate security measures should be in place to provide a safe environment.
- 5.2 These management plans will be based on existing practice for grounds maintenance and the cemeteries, and new procedures are being introduced to manage memorial safety, which take into account the current national recommendations on memorial inspection.

6 FACILITIES

- 6.1 In providing the cemetery extension the opportunity can be taken to improve the following facilities:-
- Car parking
 - Toilets, including Disabled toilets
 - Signage and entrance gates
 - Seating and bins
 - A shelter for sitting within the new extension
 - Grounds maintenance compound.

7 TIMESCALE

- 7.1 Currently there are approximately two burials per week at Hall Road Cemetery, meaning that there is sufficient capacity, all things being equal, until 2014. However, there have been a number of issues relating to ground conditions in the existing cemetery that could potentially foreshorten this time. It is considered therefore that the new area should be ready for use by 2012 to provide a margin of safety.
- 7.2 The attached timeline (Appendix A) sets out the development targets leading to this availability by 2012. Although this may seem a long lead-in period, it should be remembered that the extension would need to be in a mature and welcoming condition when being brought into use.
- 7.3 As can be seen in Appendix A, the timeline sets out a phased development to bring the total area into use, as it is thought prudent that hard works such as roads and kerbing, etc. should not be built until required. This would stop deterioration of these areas caused by seasonal movement of the heavy Essex clay.

- 7.4 This phased development also allows some flexibility in design to allow for any potential future changes in burials.
- 7.5 The first phase would therefore include redesigned access from Hall Road, revised parking, improved facilities, toilets, signage and design of part of the new road within the extension to allow entry, turning round and exit of vehicles.
- 7.6 This phased development would allow the remaining undeveloped land to be grassed and landscaped ready for future use, allowing maintenance to keep the area tidy, but could potentially be an opportunity for a garden where people could sit or walk around.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 It is necessary to consult with stakeholders regarding the development of the cemetery extension. Initially this will be with the local undertakers and monumental masons who currently are involved in the use of the cemetery. There will also need to be consultation with the main Churches and other bodies to ensure that diversity is taken into account and ensure that the cemetery can accommodate their needs as well as those of residents.

9 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Although there seems little risk in developing this cemetery extension, with the increase in migration and the number of potential different religious and non religious users, there is a reputational risk if their future needs are not identified and met in some way.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There have been no Crime and Disorder issues at Hall Road Cemetery, but advice will be sought as to potential safeguards that could be incorporated.

11 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The land has been subject to the first phase testing for DEFRA and is suitable as a burial site. Further land testing will also be required to see whether any further precautions need to be taken in respect of the site.
- 11.2 There will also need to be an ecological survey to ensure that no species are destroyed as a result of this development, and to provide information on suitable means of providing a wildlife sanctuary.
- 11.3 The information from these surveys will also be required as part of the information for the Planning Application for the Cemetery Extension.

12 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 A sum of £40,000 has been set in the Capital Budget for 2007/08. This will be used to fund surveys and some initial design works for the project.

13 RECOMMENDATION

- 13.1 It is proposed that the Board **RESOLVES**

That the objectives for the cemetery extension and the improvements to facilities, as detailed in the report, be agreed as providing the basis for the preparation of a detailed design brief and the submission of a planning application for the cemetery extension.

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Background Papers:-

None

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If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

APPENDIX A

