11. Cemeteries and churchyards

Introduction

11.1 This typology encompasses both churchyards contained within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries outside the confines of a church. This includes active private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and closed churchyards, as well as churchyards which do not offer burial space. A closed churchyard” is generally taken to mean a churchyard which has been closed for burials by an Order in Council under the Burial Acts. All types of cemetery / burial space are referred to under the name of cemetery for the purposes of this report.

11.2 Although the primary purpose of this type of open space is burial of the dead and quiet contemplation, these sites frequently have considerable value for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

11.3 Some churchyards contain areas of unimproved grasslands and various other habitats. They can also provide a sanctuary for wildlife in urban settlements and often offer historic value in the more rural landscapes.

11.4 Cemeteries and churchyards can be a significant open space provider in rural settlements. In some instances, cemeteries and churchyards may be the only open space within a settlement. They can therefore function as an area of open space, as well as fulfilling their primary purpose.

11.5 In urban areas especially, although representing a relatively minor resource in terms of the land, they can be important for nature conservation.

11.6 The importance of cemeteries and churchyards in rural areas of the Borough is emphasised in Charnwood. Of the 46 cemeteries and churchyards, 7 are in the larger settlements, 16 are in the service centres and the remainder (23) are located in the smaller settlements.

11.7 Charnwood Borough Council is a Burial Authority by virtue of S214 (1) of the Local Government Act. It manages the cemetery in Loughborough. Burial authorities have the power to provide cemeteries. There is no statutory duty to create new cemeteries or extensions of existing cemeteries, but burial authorities have powers of management of their existing cemeteries. Parish Councils also have the power to provide and maintain cemeteries and burial space under the same Local Government Act.

Current provision

11.8 The total amount of land dedicated to cemeteries and churchyards across the Borough is 37.40 hectares. Sites are evenly distributed and there are churchyards in the majority of the main towns in the Borough. These sites are owned and managed by a variety of Providers. Like many other types of open space in the Borough and Parish Councils are important providers of cemeteries and churchyards.

11.9 Of the 46 sites, at least 17 have space for burials, almost all of which is provided by Parish Councils. According to the 2007 Burial Audit, there are over 1000 plots remaining in Mountsorrel and Thurcaston.

11.10 The distribution of cemeteries and churchyards is illustrated overleaf on Map 11.1. It clearly demonstrates that the cemeteries and churchyards are dispersed evenly across the Borough.
Provision of Churches and Cemeteries in Charnwood

Legend:
- Charnwood Borough Boundary
- Analysis Areas:
  - Major Settlements
  - Service Centres
  - Church and Cemeteries
  - Churches and Cemeteries outside Charnwood

Map 11.1 – Cemeteries and churchyards across Charnwood
SECTION 11 – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

Setting provision standards

Quantity

11.11 PPG17 Annex states: "many historic churchyards provide important places for quiet contemplation, especially in busy urban areas, and often support biodiversity and interesting geological features. As such many can also be viewed as amenity greenspaces. Unfortunately, many are also run-down and therefore it may be desirable to enhance them. As churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one."

11.12 For cemeteries, PPG 17 Annex states: "every individual cemetery has a finite capacity and therefore there is steady need for more of them. Indeed, many areas face a shortage of ground for burials. The need for graves, for all religious faiths, can be calculated from population estimates, coupled with details of the average proportion of deaths which result in a burial, and converted into a quantitative population-based provision standard."

11.13 While it is not appropriate to consider a provision standard for churchyards, the future need for cemeteries and burial space should therefore be evaluated.

11.14 Although this provides an indication of the likely future land use requirements, accurately predicting current and future death rates is difficult, particularly in light of changing burial patterns as well as the evolving population profile.

11.15 The 2001 census indicates that average mortality rate is 10.2 per 1000 population. Charnwood Borough deviates from average mortality rates due to the profile of the population and this average mortality rate is marginally lower. The ongoing turnover of students means that the population is younger than average and therefore deaths are less likely to occur. In addition, Charnwood has a high proportion of Hindus, who desire cremation as opposed to burial. This is likely to reduce the need for burials. As the structure of the population changes however, and the population continues to age both nationally and locally, demand may also fluctuate.

Demand for Cemeteries in Loughborough

11.16 A Burial Audit conducted by Peter Mitchells Associates in 2007 indicated that 43 new graves are required per annum (1075 new graves over the next 25 years) in Loughborough Cemetery. This is in line with existing burial patterns (41 new graves required currently). Broadly, this is based on the following calculations:

- death rate 9.39 per annum
- 85% of deaths result in cremation
- analysis of proportion of new graves required (as opposed to use of existing graves)
- total number of new graves required.

11.17 On the assumption that one grave is 10ft by 4ft 6", and that 43 new graves are required each year, it can be projected that circa 0.02 hectares burial space will be required per annum in Loughborough. In order to measure the potential impact that population change will have on the demand for burial space, this can be converted to 0.0003ha per 1000 population.
11.18 Consultation at the stakeholder’s workshop and during internal consultations indicates that there are insufficient cemeteries for the Borough in the long term. This is supported in the Charnwood Burial Space Audit (Peter Mitchell Associates 2007) which indicates that Loughborough Cemetery requires an extension by 2032.

**Burial Space outside Loughborough**

11.19 Outside of Loughborough (but using the same parameters) the need for new graves can be calculated in a similar manner:

- death rate 9.39 per annum means there are circa 899 deaths per annum
- 85% of deaths result in cremation meaning circa 134 deaths result in burial
- current practice suggests that almost half of these burials are in existing graves, meaning that an additional 70 graves are required per annum.

11.20 The burial space audit suggests that there are over 7340 new graves available at Parish Cemeteries in the Borough. According to the 2007 Burial Audit, some Parishes are however actively seeking extensions as they are nearing capacity or do not have local facilities. The audit names East Goscote Parish as being particularly keen to secure burial space. Thurmaston, Syston and Sileby Parishes all have less than 20 years burial capacity remaining.

11.21 There is therefore sufficient burial space overall across the Borough outside of Loughborough. The preference for localised provision may however mean that extensions / new provision are desired in some areas.

11.22 On the assumption that one grave is 10ft by 4ft 6”, and that 70 new graves are required each year, it can be projected that a minimum of 0.03 hectares burial space will be required per annum outside Loughborough. In order to measure the potential impact that population change will have on the demand for burial space, this can be converted to 0.0003 ha per 1000 population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended standard – Cemeteries and churchyards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No standard to be set for churchyards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on current population figures, death rates, the proportion of burials carried out each year and the number of new graves required, it is suggested that burial space is planned using a standard 0.0003ha per 1000 population. In order to accommodate unanticipated additional demand (ie through an emergency) a strategic reserve should also be included. Burial trends and death rates should be reviewed as a minimum on a five year cycle to ensure that sufficient provision is maintained.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quality**

**Current position**

11.23 The quality cemeteries and churchyards was assessed through site visits undertaken by Charnwood Borough Council. The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is summarised in Table 11.1. This table summarises the total percentage achieved at each site (in accordance with the methodology set out in Section 2). The overall quality rating in line with the local standard is discussed later in this section.
Table 11.1 - Quality of cemeteries and churchyards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy</th>
<th>Range of quality scores (%)</th>
<th>Average Quality Score (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Larger settlements</td>
<td>34% - 77%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service centres</td>
<td>40% - 97%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller settlements</td>
<td>40% - 83%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>34% - 97%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.24 The site visit scorings indicate that lower scores (ie lower quality) were generally found for aspects such as litter/bins, seating and parking provision at cemeteries and churchyards, whilst higher scores were achieved for aspects such as, fencing, roads/paths and access and cleanliness. Appendix D records the quality scores achieved, while appendix J identifies the specific issues for each site.

11.25 The main habitats offered at cemeteries and churchyards are mature trees (31 sites), hedgerows (19 sites) and grassland (16 sites).

11.26 The key issues emerging from Table 11.1 and consultations relating to the quality of cemeteries and churchyards are summarised below:

- the majority of respondents to the household survey consider the quality of cemeteries and churchyards to be average (40%). 29% of residents rate them good and 5% poor

- responses from respondents living within the larger settlements and service centres are consistent with the overall findings, whilst responses from residents within the smaller settlements are more positive, with a higher proportion (46%) deeming the quality of cemeteries and churchyards to be good and 29% average

- results of other surveys conducted for the study suggest that most respondents consider the quality of cemeteries to be good/average, with:
  - 55% of respondents to the officer’s survey deeming quality to be good and 31% average
  - 43% of respondents to the on-line survey considering the quality of cemeteries and churchyards to be good, whilst 25% consider them average

- site assessments generally support the perceptions of residents, with the average quality score of a site being 63%. Quality scores are wide ranging from 34% - 97%.
SECTION 11 – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

Setting quality standards

11.27 As highlighted, it is only appropriate to set a quality standard for cemeteries and churchyards. This should take into account any national or local standards. Full indication of consultation and justifications for the recommended local standard are provided within D. The recommended local standard, derived directly from consultation across Charnwood, has been summarised below.

11.28 The quality standard summarises the features that residents consider to be an important determinant of the quality of provision. These key criteria will then be incorporated with the quality scores during the application of local standards.

Quality Standard (see Appendix E)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended standard – Cemeteries and churchyards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essential</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean and litter free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well kept grass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate planting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure including bins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accessibility

11.29 With regards to accessibility there are no definitive national or local standards for cemeteries and churchyards. There is also no realistic requirement to set catchments for such typologies as they cannot easily be influenced through planning policy and implementation.

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

11.30 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local accessibility standards it is also not appropriate to identify areas of deficiency or need in relation to accessibility.

11.31 It is, however, important to consider the capacity of existing sites to meet future needs. It is apparent that existing cemeteries have a finite capacity and that new provision will therefore be required when sites become full. The application of the quantity standard for cemeteries will enable the projection of future burial needs and will therefore enable the analysis of the adequacy of existing provision.

11.32 Proactive planning is essential in order to ensure the adequate provision of cemeteries. The management and maintenance of sites is a big challenge for the Council as is the provision of new burial plots on an ongoing basis and this should be considered as part of the Local Development Framework.

11.33 Analysis of the capacity of existing sites means that new provision / extension of Loughborough Cemetery is likely to be required over the LDF period. There is sufficient burial space in other areas although the preference for localised burial may mean that
additional space is desired. Provision in Sileby, Syston and Thurcaston has less than 20 years capacity remaining.

CC1

The Council should keep under review the opportunities for the reuse, expansion or acquisition of suitable land to ensure the continued and sustainable provision of local cemeteries. The LDF should facilitate the delivery of an extension to the cemetery in Loughborough and the provision of additional burial spaces in Parished areas where new localised provision is desired. A standard of 0.0003 hectares per 1000 population should be used to project future need.

11.34 In addition to ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to meet demand, it is important to consider the quality of the provision of cemeteries and churchyards. The recommended quality standard, as well as site visits, should be used to inform the improvements needed. Site visits indicate that key areas include aspects such as litter/bins, parking and seating.

11.35 The overall quality rating for each site is based on the overall quality score achieved and the essential and desirable criteria listed in the quality standard. This is summarised in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2 – Measuring sites against the recommended quality standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Quality Rating</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>All essential criteria 3 or above</td>
<td>80% or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All desirable criteria 3 or above</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>All essential criteria 3 or above</td>
<td>70 – 79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>All essential criteria 3 or above</td>
<td>60 – 69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 – 59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Below 50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.36 Table 11.3 summarises the application of the quality standard based on the quality criteria set out in Table 11.2
Table 11.3 – Quality of cemeteries and churchyards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlement hierarchy</th>
<th>% of sites excellent</th>
<th>% of sites very good</th>
<th>% of sites good</th>
<th>% of sites average</th>
<th>% of sites poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Larger settlements</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service centres</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller settlements</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nb. Figures may not add up to 100% due to rounding

11.37 The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is positive overall and generally, cemeteries and churchyards are one of the highest quality open spaces in the Borough. Despite this, while 24% of sites are considered to be very good or excellent, 17% are rated as poor. 54% of all sites are average. The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is highest in the service centres. Despite the higher quality facilities, there remain many opportunities for improvement. Map 11.2 overleaf illustrates the quality of cemeteries and churchyards from a user perspective.
SECTION 11 – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

Map 11.2 – Quality of Cemeteries and Churchyards

Quality Scores for Churchyards and Cemeteries in Charnwood

Charnwood Borough Council - Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation Study

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11.38 Quality of cemeteries and churchyards from a user perspective should be balanced with biodiversity and the creation of habitats.

11.39 This links with priorities set out in the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action plan, which identifies the importance of cemeteries and churchyards in providing urban habitats, in particular:

- calcareous grassland
- mature trees
- rocks and built structures (in particular encouraging lichens).

11.40 Cemeteries and churchyards can be significant providers of open space, particularly in rural areas. In towns they can represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land required, but are important for nature conservation.

11.41 Local standards for accessibility and quantity have not been set. Despite this, it remains important to consider the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards anticipating future demand as well as assessing the current level of provision.

11.42 The essential and desirable features set out in the quality standards should guide the future development and improvement of cemeteries and churchyards across the Borough. Site visits indicate that the quality of existing cemeteries and churchyards is high.

11.43 In some instances, cemeteries and churchyards are the only type of open space within a village, making them a particularly valuable element of the rural green space network. Enhancements to accessibility and quality should be prioritised in these areas.

11.44 The wider benefits of churchyards are significant and it is wrong to place a value on churchyards and cemeteries focusing solely on quality and accessibility. In addition to offering a functional value, many cemeteries and churchyards have wider benefits including heritage, cultural and landscape values. They are also identified as a key urban habitat in the Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Strategy.

11.45 The key priorities for the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards across the Borough therefore include:

- the LDF should facilitate the delivery of additional cemeteries and should project need across the LDF period. New provision is likely to be required in Loughborough using a baseline figure of 0.0003ha per 1000 population
• recognise and promote the nature conservation value of cemeteries and churchyards and investigate the implementation of ecological management
• enhance the quality of sites where appropriate using the essential and desirable features as a guide.