

## HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 12 July 2021

**Title:** Tower Hill Cemetery - Pedestrian Access

**Contact Officer:** Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer - Angus Whitburn

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### **Background**

Witney Town Council Officers met with councillors on the 2nd of July at Tower Hill to discuss the proposed pedestrian gate at Tower Hill. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the original plan for the new pedestrian access which involved coming in at the top corner of tower hill with an L-shaped path looping around to join in at the top corner of section 8.

### **Current Situation**

Permission was granted by Blenheim Estates on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July for the new proposed entrance through the side wall. (They could not be entirely certain that the walkway to the side of the cemetery was in their ownership, but as the land for the cemetery was purchased from the Estate, it was highly likely).

This would mean the path would lead directly from the top corner of section 8 straight to the dry-stone wall.

The new path would lead past fewer graves and avoid the wrap-around of one grave. This is less impactful on plot owners and more visually appealing.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Increased pedestrian access will hopefully help to reduce vehicle usage. Choosing to support increased pedestrian access instead of vehicle access would be seen as Witney Town Council heading in the right direction.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

A consultation process was carried out on the purposed pedestrian access. Feedback was generally not in favour of the new pedestrian access. Although the questionnaire submitted was misunderstood by some users there was still general disapproval.

Blenheim estates have not been able to categorically prove this unregistered land is theirs. If another party did claim ownership their authority is irrelevant. In the event of this Witney Town Council may have to return the wall to its original state.

### **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- It would be expected that the shorter path required for the new entrance location would come at a reduced cost. The wall may need more engineering due to it being on a slight incline.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Agree on the new requested location for the new pedestrian access.
2. Officers are to quote with contractors for the new path and access point.
3. If the new pedestrian access is agreed by the council, then the council need to consider how they announce and justify it bearing in mind the negative feedback from the consultation process.