

8. Future development of the site

8.1 Archaeology

- 8.2 There is no doubt that the future development of the site is heavily constrained by the presence of historic remains over a significant proportion of the land. The letter dated 25/7/2000 from the Deputy County Archaeological Officer states:

"If ... you decide to proceed with the Cogges Hill site then the archaeological aspect will become a material consideration with financial implications"

- 8.3 It may be possible to use the affected area of the cemetery following appropriate further archaeological work, which might include the excavation and recording of all in-situ remains. This would be subject to agreement with the County Archaeologist and, even if permitted, would have a significant cost. Balanced against the cost would be the income derived from graves and the extension of the useful life of the cemetery.
- 8.4 I estimate that this restricted area measures approximately 0.5 ha and that there is space for at least 1,000 adult coffin standard 9' x 4' (2.8 x 1.2m) grave spaces. At current prices of £280 for the exclusive rights alone this would equate to approximately £280,000 income.
- 8.5 The layout of this area in the back to back style with paths as I have recommended above would reduce the number of graves and potentially reduce the income.
- 8.6 However, I recommend consultation with the County Archaeologist to obtain an understanding of the options available, if any, and the likely costs to make the affected area available for burial.

- 8.7 Discussion with the County Archaeologist would also be a first step in considering whether alternative forms of burial might be acceptable in this area of the cemetery. Subject to the depth of foundations required, it would be possible to construct columbaria and/or mausolea. The former are above-ground niches for ashes and the latter are above-ground chambers for coffin burial.
- 8.8 The Town Council's current charge for the exclusive rights in an ashes plot and one interment is £245. The costs of purchasing and installing columbaria are such that the comparable fee would be around £1,000 for only a 10 year lease. This could significantly limit the demand for these features.
- 8.9 Whilst they have proved popular in some cemeteries, mausolea are primarily preferred by people from the Italian community and there is unlikely to be great demand for them in Witney.
- 8.10 In both cases, constructing such features would effectively seal the archaeological remains beneath them for an indefinite period, as it would be very problematic to remove the ashes and coffins in order to demolish the features and allow further archaeological excavation.

8.11 Roads

- 8.12 The original design of the cemetery envisaged a new permanent main entrance onto a new Cogges Link Road that, in fact has not been built.
- 8.13 The distance from the furthest point of the current road to the southern boundary is approximately 100m. It will therefore be necessary to extend the existing cemetery internal road to facilitate access by vehicles and equipment to all parts of the cemetery.

8.14 The scope for the construction of an extension to the road may also be constrained by the area of high archaeological importance. The 'Envisage Final Scheme' design plan by Simon Richards Associates clearly shows new roads in this area. However, I would recommend consultation with the County Archaeologist to clarify whether any road could be built in this area and any constraints upon its design.

8.15 If the new road must keep clear of the archaeology, I suggest that a double-width single road leading from the existing to a turning circle near the southern boundary could provide sufficient access to all areas and at the same time maximising the space available for graves.

8.16 Woodland and Meadow burial

8.17 The statistics demonstrate the low demand, only one or two per year, for these types of burial as currently provided at Windrush Cemetery. I believe that the low demand can partly be explained by the juxtaposition of these forms of 'natural' burial close to standard Lawn graves and headstones.

8.18 My recommendation to install concrete beams and additional paths on a back to back system will potentially increase the formality of the Lawn sections.

8.19 I recommend that, following decision-making on the measures required to improve the surface water problem in the cemetery and the potential future layout of roads and burial areas relative to the area of archaeological interest, a new area should be developed for woodland burial. This would potentially lie in the area marked 'Phase 4 Meadow Burials' on the original design plan.

8.20 This location, separate from the formal areas, could be developed more in keeping with woodland burial than the narrow strip of land currently in use.

8.21 I recommend consideration of the method adopted at the Arbory Trust: please see the web site <http://www.arborytrust.org/burialground.htm>

8.22 Whilst the scale of the site is far greater than Windrush Cemetery, I believe the design could be copied to create a far more appealing area than has so far been available.