

## **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 private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. 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.
- 11.2 Some churchyards contain areas of unimproved grasslands and various other habitats. They can make provide a sanctuary for wildlife as well as offering historic value. WildaboutManchester, the biodiversity strategy for Manchester highlights the importance of providing habitats across the City and cemeteries and churchyards will be pivotal in the delivery of this objective.
- 11.3 As well as having a functional role, cemeteries and churchyards can also offer important recreational opportunities. This was reinforced during consultation, with 23% of residents suggesting that they visit cemeteries at least once per month.

### **Current position**

- 11.4 There are currently 20 churchyards in Manchester. Additionally, there are eight cemeteries in the City. Manchester City Council is responsible for running five cemeteries and one crematorium in the City, specifically:
- Blackley Cemetery - Opened 1953
  - Blackley Crematorium - Opened 1959
  - Gorton Cemetery - Opened 1900
  - Manchester General Cemetery - Opened 1837
  - Philips Park Cemetery - Opened 1866
  - Southern Cemetery - Opened 1879
- 11.5 The distribution of sites across the City is summarised in Table 11.1 . This considers only provision that is contained within the Manchester City Council boundaries.

**Table 11.1 –Churchyards and cemeteries in Manchester**

Analysis area	Current provision (hectares)	Number of sites	Smallest site (hectares)	Largest site (hectares)
City Centre	0	0	-	-
East	27.23	8	0.17	16.34
Central	0	0	-	-
South	22.40	4	0.18	21.59
North	44.99	14	0.11	20.99
Wythenshawe	1.23	2	0.58	0.64
<b>Overall</b>	<b>95.85</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>21.59</b>

11.6 It can be seen from Table 11.1 that:

- provision is unevenly distributed across the City, with half of all sites located in North Manchester and no sites found in Manchester City Centre and the central area
- the total amount of land dedicated to cemeteries and churchyards in the City is 95.86 hectares. Nearly half of this land is located in North Manchester (44.99 hectares)
- the size of sites ranges significantly from 0.11 hectares to 21.59 hectares. This is reflective of the varying characteristics of sites in this category.

11.7 Reports of the Bereavement services anticipate that there remain circa 25 – 30 years capacity at existing burial grounds.

**Setting provision standards**

***Quantity standard***

11.8 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."

11.9 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."

## **SECTION 11 – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS**

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- 11.10 While it is not appropriate to consider a provision standard for churchyards, the future need for cemeteries and burial space should be evaluated.
- 11.11 A report to the health and well being scrutiny committee (November 2008) indicates that there are approximately 4195 deaths registered each year in Manchester. The Cremation Society of Great Britain indicates that circa 75% of all deaths result in cremation.
- 11.12 A December 2008 report (Manchester City Council Neighbourhood Services, Report to Scrutiny ) indicates that the proportion of burials is higher than average in Manchester, highlighting that circa 1800 burials take place in Manchester every year, of which 40% require new graves and 60% are in pre-purchased graves. This would suggest that 720 new graves are needed per annum.
- 11.13 The report highlights the difficulties of projecting future need, particularly in light of growing trends towards cremation and changing death rates. This also links with data provided by the Office of National Statistics, which suggests that the death rate will increase from 2010.
- 11.14 On the assumption that one grave is 10ft by 4ft 6”, and that 720 new graves are required per annum, it can be projected that a minimum of 0.31 hectares burial space will be required per annum. In order to measure the potential impact that population change will have on the demand for burial space, this can be converted to 0.0007 ha per 1000 population.

### **Recommended standard – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS**

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 0.31 hectares is set aside per annum. (This equates to 0.0007 ha per 1000 population). In order to accommodate unanticipated additional demand (i.e 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.

### **Quality**

- 11.15 The quality of cemeteries and churchyards can be particularly important in encouraging local residents to use these sites for recreational purposes. As highlighted earlier in this section, there is an overall positive perception of the quality of existing sites. Key findings emerging from consultation relating to the provision of cemeteries and churchyards included:
- the quality of cemeteries and churchyards is regarded as good by 25% of respondents to the household survey. A further 40% of residents suggest that the quality of provision is average
  - some residents at drop in sessions state that the majority of cemeteries and churchyards are well maintained across the City
  - although there is an overall perception that the quality of cemeteries is reasonable, some issues were raised with regards dog walking and misuse of headstones. Cemeteries and churchyards are also perceived to be misused by young people as a result of a lack of dedicated provision for this age group.

**Quality standards**

11.16 PPG17 suggests that quality standards should take into account national and local standards. Full indication of consultation and justifications for the recommended local standard are provided within Appendix G. The recommended local standard, derived directly from consultation across Manchester, has been summarised below:

**Quality Standard (see Appendix G)**

<b>Recommended standard – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS</b>	
Local consultation, national guidance and best practice suggest that the following features are essential and desirable to local residents:	
<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>
Secure	Toilets
Clean/litter free	Flowers/trees
Parking facilities	Footpaths
Detailed analysis of the local consultation suggests that with regards to cemeteries and churchyards, the relative importance of the key components is as follows:	
<b>Component of quality</b>	<b>Weighting</b>
Security and Safety	<b>1</b>
Cleanliness and maintenance	<b>3</b>
Vegetation	<b>2</b>
Ancillary accommodation	<b>4</b>

11.17 The quality of each site has been assessed through a detailed site visit and the completion of the pro forma described in Section 2. This is provided in detail in Appendix G. It is important to note that the quality score represents a snapshot in time and records only the quality of the site at the time of the visit.

11.18 Analysis of the quality of cemeteries and churchyards across Manchester indicates that:

- site assessments reveal that the quality of cemeteries and churchyards is lower than some other types of open space, with the average quality score of a site being 72%
- quality scores range significantly from 36% - 100% and ten sites achieved quality scores of 80% and above
- St Luke's, Cheetham (36%) and Manchester General Cemetery (44%) are the two lowest scoring sites. Site assessments reveal that these sites were perceived to have been neglected, with litter and weeds evident
- Blackley Cemetery and Crematorium (100%) is the highest quality site in the City. This site was perceived to be clean and litter free and well maintained.

**Accessibility standards**

- 11.19 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.
- 11.20 Instead, it should be ensured that access to specific sites is adequate. Site visits reveal that access to cemeteries is good overall, with the key issue identified for improvement being signage to sites.

**Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas**

- 11.21 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards it is also not appropriate to examine the spatial distribution of these sites in relation to access.
- 11.22 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.
- 11.23 As highlighted, a recent Bereavement services report indicates that capacity is sufficient for the next 25 – 30 years. This assumes that demand remains constant and no changes in burial patterns are seen.

<b>CC1</b>	Monitor the ongoing demand for new provision assuming that 0.31ha will be required per annum (or 0.0007ha per 1000 population).
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- 11.24 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 and the value of the current provision and to strive to achieve the quality criteria set for all churchyards and cemeteries.
- 11.25 The value of cemeteries and churchyards in the promotion of biodiversity and provision of habitats should be reinforced. This links with targets set out in the Wild about Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan. Additionally, providing closed cemeteries and churchyards are made safe, these sites have significant potential to widen biodiversity in the City and to provide opportunities for residents to experience nature.

<b>CC2</b>	Stakeholders should recognise and promote the nature conservation value of cemeteries and churchyards and develop a greater awareness of ecological management and maintenance of cemeteries and churchyards.
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- 11.26 In areas of limited open space provision (or where churchyards are the only open space type), churchyard and cemetery sites are of particular importance. In these areas, qualitative enhancement is crucial to ensure local residents value this type of open space. Community involvement in the management and maintenance of such sites should be encouraged. Sites scoring well in terms of quality should be considered examples of good practice.

**CC3**

In areas of limited open space provision, churchyard and cemetery sites are of particular importance. The quality of cemeteries is of paramount importance if sites are to be promoted as opportunities for rest and relaxation. Quality improvements should be made where required using the essential and desirable features as a guide. Encourage community involvement in the management of cemeteries and churchyards.

### **Summary**

- 11.27 Cemeteries and churchyards can be significant providers of open space. While they may represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land required, they are frequently important for nature conservation.
- 11.28 In light of the land required for burials, it is essential to monitor demand on an ongoing basis. Demand for new provision should be monitored using the indicative standard of 0.31 hectares per annum, or 0.0007 hectares per 1000 population.
- 11.29 The essential and desirable features set out in the quality standards should guide the future development and improvement of cemeteries and churchyards across the City. Site quality is lower in comparison to many other typologies although many residents suggested that the quality of cemeteries was good.
- 11.30 The wider benefits of cemeteries and churchyards are significant and it is incorrect to place a value on cemeteries and churchyards 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.
- 11.31 The key priorities for the future delivery of cemeteries and churchyards across the City therefore are:
- monitor the ongoing demand for new provision using the standard of 0.31 hectares per annum, or 0.0007 hectares per 1000 residents
  - recognise and promote the nature conservation value of closed 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
  - encourage community involvement in the provision of cemeteries and churchyards.