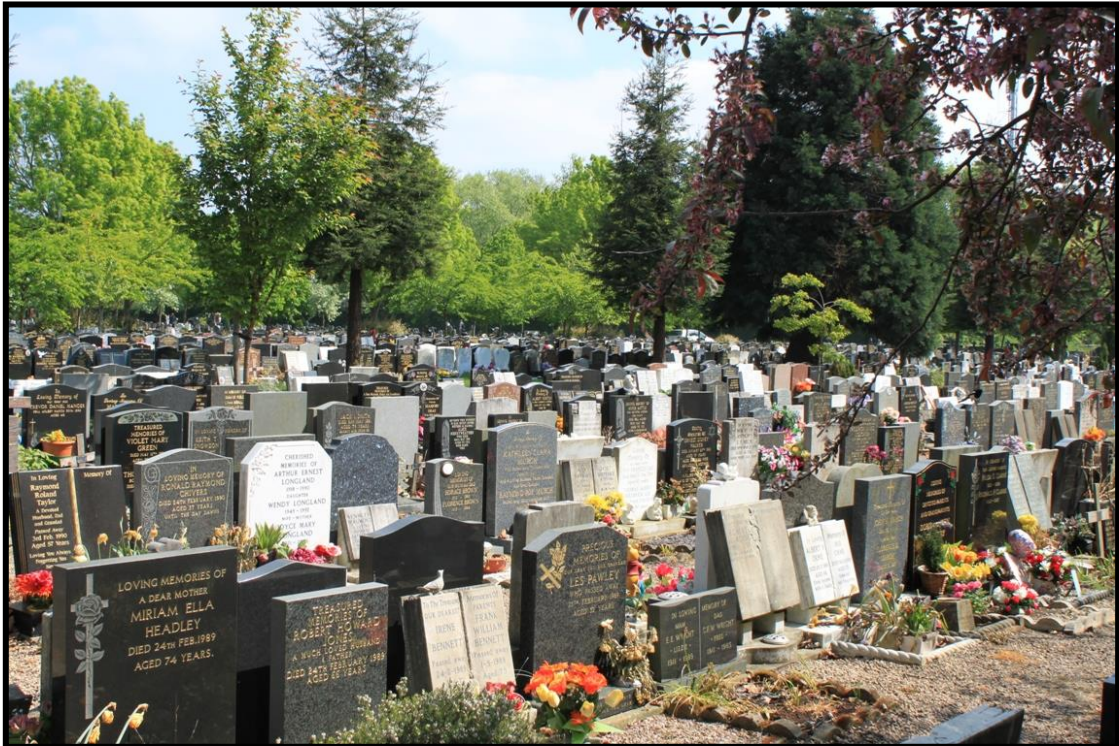


Leicester City Council

Burial Space Strategy Summary



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of strategy

To devise a strategy to provide long term sustainable solutions to the decreasing availability of burial space, and increasing costs of burial in the city

2.0 Strategic environment

2.1 National Legislation

Leicester City Council is a burial authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 s.214.

The Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 gives councils wide ranging powers of management for cemeteries.

The city council is under no statutory duty to provide a cemetery, but is required to maintain its existing cemeteries.

The city council is required to make funeral arrangements under the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984.

2.2 Leicester City Council Strategic Influences

Leicester's Core Strategy Policy 16 specifically states that:

"We consider that new developments should create an environment for culture and creativity to flourish by creating or retaining facilities, including...cemeteries and crematoria"

The city council is currently working on producing a Local Plan document that will identify potential sites for future developments up to 2026.

2.3 Trends in Population, Burial and Cremation

Leicester's population is forecasted to grow from 329,900 to 376,000 by 2030. Although mortality rates are decreasing, life expectancy in Leicester is still below the national average.

Nationally and in Leicester, the ratio of cremations to burials appears to have stabilised at 70% and 30% respectively. The city council's Bereavement Services provides services to both city and county residents.

Leicester's Bereavement Services conduct an average of 830 burials and 3200 cremations each year with an average requirement for 380 new plots for full burial and 75 new plots for cremated remains each year.

In addition to the Christian community, there is a demand for cremation facilities from the Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Buddhist communities and for burial facilities from the Muslim and Jewish communities.

3.0 The Cemetery Service

3.1 Leicester City Council Cemeteries

Leicester City Council currently operates 4 cemeteries:

Cemetery	Opened	Acres	Hectares	New Graves Available
Welford Road	1849	29	11.74	No
Belgrave	1881	5	2.02	No
Gilroes	1902	64	25.91	Yes
Saffron Hill	1931	32	12.96	Yes

3.2 Gilroes Cemetery and Crematorium

On average the cemetery will deal with 479 burials per year, 233 of which are re-openings of existing graves. The recent extension of the cemetery means there is sufficient burial space for the next 14 years at current burial rates.

3.3 Saffron Hill Cemetery

Saffron Hill Cemetery was extended in 2008 to provide additional non-denominational burial capacity. This will be sufficient for 18 years of use at current levels.

The existing Muslim burial section is predicted to reach full capacity within 3 years. A cemetery extension will be opened to the south of the site in 2013/14.

4.0 Burial Space Options

4.1 Cemetery extensions

Gilroes Cemetery was extended in 2012 which has provided additional burial space sufficient for an estimated 14 years.

Saffron Hill Cemetery is to be extended in 2013/14 to provide additional burial space sufficient for an estimated 24 years.

Priority in the short term is to ensure continuity for Muslim burials at Saffron Hill Cemetery as the site already contains supporting infrastructure e.g. Janazgah.

While there is land adjacent to Belgrave Cemetery that offers potential for a cemetery extension, this is not considered to be viable.

4.2 New cemetery provision

A long term aim of the strategy is to establish a new cemetery within the city to provide continuity of burial space.

Consultation will be conducted to identify potential sites.

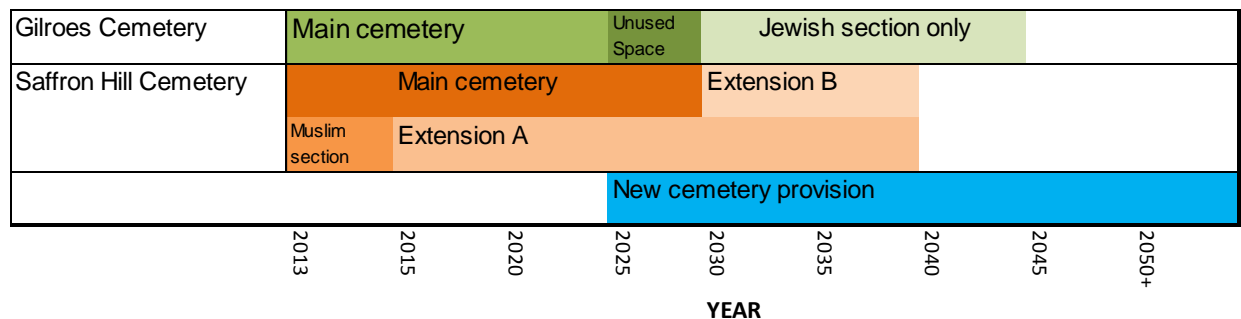
The land for a new cemetery needs to be secured to prevent loss to other developments as potential cemetery sites in the city are extremely limited.

4.3 Use of unused space in current cemeteries

A significant amount of potential burial space is lost between rows of graves, on ends of rows or as planted features. In certain places, this land can be utilised to provide additional burial space where it does not compromise the nature of the cemeteries.

4.4 Cemetery capacity

The following illustration shows a timeline at which the cemeteries will reach full capacity.



4.5 The reuse of graves

There are two categories of re-use:

- Reuse of old purchased graves.
- Use of grave space remaining in old graves with no Rights to Burial

In this instance reuse refers to the disturbance of human remains and re-interment at a greater depth within the same grave, and should not be confused with the use of graves whereby only the remaining depth in graves is used.

Realistically, the only long term sustainable solution to a shortage of burial space is to ‘recycle’ existing cemeteries by reusing graves. This would mean that old graves could be reused indefinitely and that new income could then be attracted to help pay for ongoing maintenance of established cemeteries.

There is currently no national policy on the reuse of old graves, although in limited circumstances reuse of graves is permitted by London burial authorities and is common practice in other European countries. Reuse of graves is a complex and sensitive issue and until a clearer national policy is established it would be impractical to consider this option further.

4.6 Rights of Burial

The city council currently sells Rights of Burial on a 99 year lease. Many burial authorities now recognise 99 year rights as being too long a period:

- It ties up burial space for too long
- It is inevitable that contact with the rights owners can be lost
- A memorial is likely to become unstable over such a long period

There are a range of benefits associated with introducing a more flexible rights structure:

- Shorter rights period
- Improved burial choice
- Fairer burial costs
- Improved contact with families of bereaved
- Releases unused burial space earlier
- Negates requirement to petition Secretary of State to extinguish unused rights after 75 years.

Introduction of a new rights structure will offer additional burial choices for bereaved families and would better reflect the long term cost of providing graves. Rights of Burial will be offered on flexible terms with options for extension. Following expiration of exclusive rights any remaining burial space would be utilised for additional burials.

This is a very sensitive issue and further consultation will be undertaken.

4.7 Natural Burial Space

Natural burial is a term used to describe the burial of human remains where the burial area creates habitat for wildlife or preserves existing habitats (woodland, species rich meadows, orchards, etc).

While no natural burial space is provided in the council's cemeteries at present, there would be an opportunity for inclusion in a new cemetery or as a separate natural burial ground within the city to improve burial choice for the bereaved.

5.0 Burial costs

Burial fees have risen significantly in the last few years but still do not reflect the true long term cost of providing and maintaining burial space. The cost to provide and maintain an adult lawn grave for 99 years is estimated at £1,415 compared to the current fee of £1,050. There is a need for fees to better reflect long term costs to enable cemeteries to be maintained to a high standard in the future.

The city council will introduce a flexible rights structure that better reflects the long term costs of burial and provides the maximum burial space by utilising the full depth of a grave.

Grave plots will be priced according to burial capacity and cost of long term maintenance.

The table below is an illustration of how this flexible rights structure would work.

Exclusive Rights	30 years	50 years	75 years
Single Burial (Grave Space A)	750	900	1050
Double Burial (Grave Space A+B)	900	1050	1200
Triple Burial (Grave Space A+B+C)	1050	1200	1350
10 year extension	175	175	175

6.0 Summary and action plan

6.1 Strategy aims and recommendations

The aims of the Burial Space Strategy can be summarised as:

1. Extending the operational life of existing cemeteries
2. Providing a new cemetery in the city
3. Introduction of new Rights of Burial and fee structures for graves
4. Reuse of grave plots that have unused burial space

Burial space in cemeteries is a finite resource and solutions are needed to ensure the long term sustainable provision of burial space in Leicester.

Priority will be to maximise the burial capacity of existing sites through the provision of cemetery extensions and the use of unused space.

Before the current cemeteries reach capacity, there will be a need to develop a new cemetery to provide longer term burial space.

Further consultation with Leicester’s faith communities regarding future partnerships in establishing new cemetery provision will be undertaken.

The current fees for burial do not reflect the long term cost of providing and maintaining a grave and the review and introduction of a new fee structure is needed.

Introduction of a new flexible rights structure will offer additional burial choices for bereaved families and would better reflect the long term cost of providing graves.

Alongside a new flexible rights structure, graves would be dug to a deeper depth to increase the number of burial spaces available in a cemetery.

Introduction of a natural burial option will improve choice for bereaved families and enhance the environmental sustainability of the council’s cemeteries.

6.2 Action Plan

The action plan draws on all the issues and recommendations highlighted in the Burial Space Strategy to meet the overall strategic objective to enable the long term sustainable provision of burial space in Leicester

The proposals reflect current legislation and best practice from across the UK in planning future burial space.

Key Action	Outcomes	Year	Capital cost implications
Open final extension to Saffron Hill Cemetery	Provide new burial space	2014	£450K
Introduce a policy to dig all graves to a deeper depth	Increased number of burial spaces per grave plot	2014	None
Introduce a new Rights of Burial scheme	New scheme offering additional bereavement choices	2014	None
Introduce a new fee structure	New scheme offering wider bereavement choices and fairer pricing	2014	None
Identify site(s) for new cemetery	Site for future cemetery secured	2014	None
Begin use of unused space at Gilroes Cemetery for new graves	Provide additional burial space to extend life of cemetery	2028	None
Open a new cemetery	Provide new burial space for the long term	2025-2030	£3M
Begin use of unused space at Saffron Hill Cemetery for new graves	Provide additional burial space to extend life of cemetery	2038	None
Reuse grave plots without Rights of Burial for additional burials where space allows.	New burials in old graves will increase useable burial space in cemeteries	2044	None