

Technical Report Final Draft

Cemeteries Provision

March 2019

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this technical paper is to examine the case for additional burial space to serve the St Albans area and inform the Local Plan for the inclusion of new burial space.

There is growing demand for cemetery space from an already increased population, estimated population growth during the plan period to 2036 and the effects of an ageing population. Therefore it is important to consider how much additional land is needed and where it should be provided. Providing burial space is a statutory function of the Council.

The population of St Albans City and District Council area based on ONS 2016 based projections is 148,800 persons. The future population level is planned to be 173,162 based on the level of housing growth over the plan period to 2036 equivalent to 76,369 households based on 2.26 persons per household. SADC has an established and growing older population. Almost a quarter of the households within the district are aged 65 and over. The aging factors of the core population are a significant driver in the level of provision for cemeteries.

Geography	St Albans
Ethnic Group	Population
All categories: Religion	140664
Christian	83988
Buddhist	615
Hindu	1777
Jewish	1664
Muslim	5167
Sikh	303
Other religion	435
No religion	36278
Religion not stated	10437 ¹

Table 1 SADC Population by ethnicity

¹ https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/data_finder

2. Background to St Albans District Council Cemeteries

There are three cemeteries in the district:

- Hatfield Road Cemetery, St Albans – Essentially ‘full’. Some limited capacity in relation to reclaimed graves. New laws to allow reuse of graves through ‘lift and deepen’ will potentially slightly increase capacity.
- London Road Cemetery, St Albans – The District Council has extended London Road cemetery (in 2009) and re-arranged provision (2017-18) to provide capacity for a further approximately 10 years. Part of the additional land is for Muslim burials.
- Westfield Road Cemetery, Harpenden – estimated 33 years capacity – NB: caters primarily for Harpenden rather than St Albans

More information on site descriptions can be found in Appendix 1

3. Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

St Albans City and District Council is a burial authority, and as such has a statutory duty to manage its cemeteries and carry out burials within the law, as laid down in the Local Government Act 1972, and the subsequent statutory instrument, the Local Authority Cemeteries Order 1977.

The Council has adopted the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management’s (ICCM) Guiding Principles for Burials and Cremation as the framework for providing best practise in the Council’s bereavement service.

Cemeteries do not exist in isolation but form an important element of St Albans City and District Council’s wider policy framework, linking closely with other strategic initiatives. Cemeteries have an important function to amenity providing attractive places to visit and can be places for natural heritage and biodiversity. They can also be places of cultural and heritage importance to many people.

The most active form of regulation of cemeteries and new cemetery developments is now exercised by The Environment Agency, largely due to a concern with the pollution of water sources.

In 1970’s the Council purchased farmland at London Road, St Albans, for the development of a new cemetery, following Hatfield Road Cemetery reaching capacity for burials in new grave space.

London Road Cemetery was originally laid out in 1980 and further expanded in 2009. This is the most popular cemetery with most burials taking place there.

Following a review of St Albans Cemeteries Fees and Charges and future burial capacity in 2017 the Council became aware of the requirement to secure additional

land to form more burial space. However, to date no substantial land transfer or development of an alternative site has taken place.

This was reported to and resolved by St Albans City & District Council Cabinet in December 2017. (performance report Appendix I) Please see link to the report section <http://stalbans.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=29399#mgDocuments>

4. Local demand on services

Demand for services has increased significantly over the last couple of years, especially to reserve graves. If this trend continues the increased pressure on the service will impact the availability of plots for residents in future years. There is currently rapidly diminishing supply of plots within cemeteries and a need has been identified for additional cemetery provision. As it can be seen from table 1 above SADC is an ever changing multi-cultural district of persons with different cultural and burial practices. Although the forecast numbers of burials is lower (than would otherwise have been the case) due to the recent fees and charges review and the reduction of non-residents using the service for 17/18 compared to 16/17, there is still a positive increase in trend from previous years. This, coupled with the increasing population means that it is essential that new burial space is allocated.

Table 2 Demand for Burial Services

Service	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18	
	Res	Non	Res	Non	Res	Non
Burial in a grave	97	22	133	30	143	15
Burial of Ashes	59	20	68	28	75	18
Purchase of Grave or Ashes Plot	89	23	155	36	120	11
<i>All figures exclude children's services</i>						

5. Current and Future capacity

Officers have assessed the number of years of space left in the cemeteries. This is shown in the table below:

Table 3 Current capacity

Type of Plot	Years Remaining		
	Westfield Rd	London Rd	Hatfield Rd
Grave Plots	33	10	N/A
Muslim Grave Plots	N/A	8.5	N/A
Reclaimed Grave Plots	N/A	N/A	<4
Cremated Remains (ashes) Plots	Currently <5 years new areas have been identified		
Sanctum Vaults	10 Due to disparity of cost of ashes plot, uptake is low		
Vase Block	10 Due to disparity of cost of ashes plot uptake, is low		

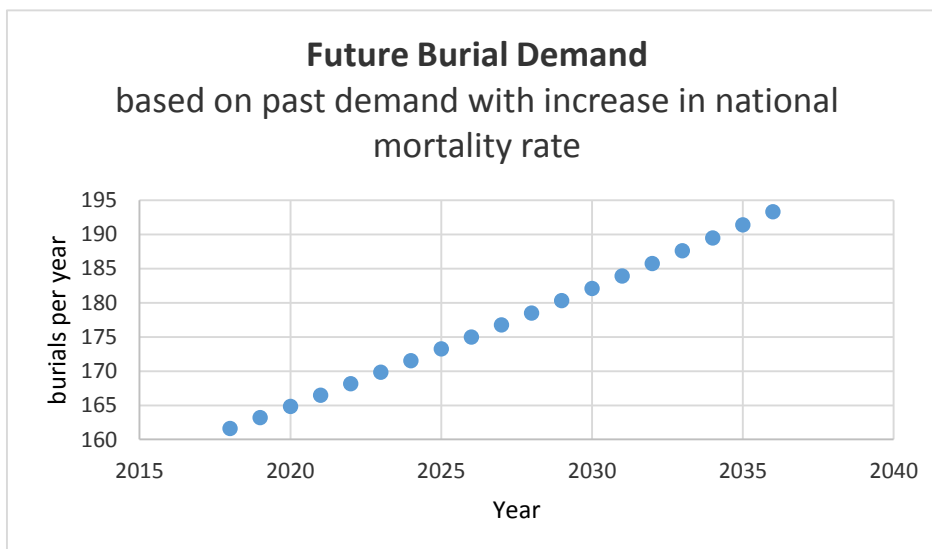
There were very few ashes plots left by early 2018. A new Garden of Rest was opened in the autumn 2018 at London Road Cemetery providing 154 new ashes plots. Hatfield Road Cemetery has 20 new underground vaults for ashes. Each plot can accommodate 4 sets of ashes depending on the size of the container/urn.

The Council is seeing an increase in Muslim community interments at London Road. The burial practises allow only one burial per grave. Due to their only being approximately 2 years of allotted grave space left by 2017, the Council was required to allocate another section of London Road Cemetery for Muslim burials. This has led to an impact on the remaining space for other types of burials.

- Future demand

Based on potential new grave requirements of circa 160 per annum post 2022, our calculations suggest that to ensure that the cemetery managed by St Albans District City & District Council to last 18 years, until the end of the plan period (ICCM guidance suggests that LA should be securing at least 30-40 years of burial space), they would need to occupy approximately 3 hectares allowing for population growth.

This figure is derived from current annual average local burial numbers over the last few years (St Albans cemeteries)



As a 'sense check' of the data above, based on potential new grave requirements of circa 277 per annum post 2022, our calculations suggest that to ensure that the cemetery managed by St Albans District City & District Council to last 18 years they would need to occupy approximately 4 to 5 hectares allowing for population growth.

This 277 figure is derived from current annual average local death numbers over the last two years (1,111 per year) calculations of predicted death rates per capita of population (1% per annum) and then back calculated as a percentage of the national ratio of burial to cremation; currently 75:25 in favour of cremation against a median population increase.

- Planned population changes

The population of St Albans City and District Council area based on ONS 2016 based projections is 148,800 persons. The future population level is estimated to be 173,162 based on the level of housing growth over the plan period to 2036 equivalent to 76,369 households based on 2.26 persons per household.

Table 4 SADC Population and Household estimates (ONS)

SADC Population and Household Estimates	Pre-Plan Period			Plan Period		Additional households per year
	2018	2019	2020	2026	2036	
Year	2018	2019	2020	2026	2036	Average 2019-2036
Population (ONS 2016-based projections)	148,800	149,900	150,900	156,200	162,100	
Households (ONS 2014-based projections)	60,383	61,063	61,719	65,565	71,848	
Additional households p/yr (ONS)		680	656	642	622	637
Additional p/yr (SADC Local Plan Trajectory)		469	513	1223	786	888
Add est. by SADC		-211	-143	581	164	
Pop per household (ONS)	2.46	2.45	2.44	2.38	2.26	
Population (SADC)		149,955	150,641	157,888	173,162	
Households (SADC)		60,852	61,365	65,920	76,369	

The future population pyramid for 2036 as proportional to population figures of 2018 are detailed in the table below. In comparison with 2018 the age bracket from 75-90 is to increase from 10,600 to 18,100 persons. It is clear that SADC will have an increasingly larger portion of older persons in the future which will place further pressures on cemetery provision.

Age bracket	2018 Population (ONS based 1000's)	2036 Population (ONS 2016 based projections 1000's)	% of total population	SADC projected population 2036 (ONS)
75-79	4.4	5.6	3.5	6,060
80-84	3.5	4.9	3	5,195
85-89	2.3	3.9	2.4	4,156
90	1.4	2.5	1.6	2,771
Total (75-90)	10.6	16.9	10.5	18,182
Total (all)	147	161	100	173,162

6. Locations for new burial space

Currently there are no private cemeteries within the District and there is also a diminishing supply in parish churchyards. There are 4 closed churchyards that the District Council has a responsible to maintenance. For those that have capacity for

burial, they are very limited with space (restricted for cremations, or local parishioners). In 2007 the District Council helped acquired 0.5 acres of land for St Marys Church, (Redbourn), to assist them keeping the church yard open. If this reduction in other available burial space continues this will put further pressure on the cemeteries operated and managed by the District Council.

Other options for burial

Nationally, other than cremation, the interest and demand for natural burial, (also called green or woodland burial), has grown in recent years as an alternative option for people concerned about the potential environmental impact of modern funerals. Hatfield Road Cemetery offers a Green Burial area, although this isn't proving a popular choice in the District at present.

Two other options are being considered nationally for disposal of the dead, namely promession (essentially deep freezing followed by vibration) and hydrolysis. These options would require a change in the law before they could be introduced. They are seen as alternatives to cremation and are expected to be considered by crematoria to operate alongside traditional crematoria plant.

Location

The current London Road Cemetery location is situated on the outskirts of City of St Albans surrounded farmland between London Road and Nightingale Lane, (Hertfordshire County Council right of way). It is centrally based within the District, in close proximity to the main settlement of St Albans and near to the A414. Therefore it is in an accessible location for access by walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicles. An extension to the existing cemetery will also provide continuity for and efficiency for stakeholders visiting existing graves and memorials. It will also be more economically viable in operation than building a wholly new cemetery.

7. Conclusion

Whilst demand for new burial space is increasing, there is currently insufficient suitable land to meet current and future demand in the District without allocation of additional land for cemetery provision. Improvements and extensions of existing facilities should satisfy community needs. A new extension to the existing cemetery will allow for this as it is a sustainable location whilst providing continuity for stakeholders and be more economically viable than building a new cemetery.

8. Appendices Index

- Appendix A: Site Descriptions of Cemeteries Hatfield Road Cemetery, St Albans, London Road Cemetery, St Albans and Westfield Road Cemetery, Harpenden
- Appendix B: Change to Cemeteries Fees and Charges Update, Appendix I of Cabinet Report December 2017