

Cemeteries and churchyards

Definition

- 12.1 Churchyards are encompassed within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries are burial grounds outside the confines of a church. These include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. The primary purpose of this type of open space is for burial of the dead and quiet contemplation but also for the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Picture 12.1 – Gilmorton Churchyard – an example of this typology



Specific strategic context and consultations

Conservation importance

- 12.2 Cemeteries and churchyards can be a significant open space provider in some areas particularly in rural areas. In other areas they can represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land, but are able to provide areas of nature conservation importance. Some churchyards retain areas of unimproved grasslands and other various habitats.
- 12.3 They can make a significant contribution to the provision of urban green space sometimes providing a sanctuary for wildlife in urban areas devoid of greenspace.
- 12.4 Although many have restricted access they still provide a useful resource for the local community. A wide variety of habitats can be often be found supporting the other open space types such as areas of semi-natural and natural areas.

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- 12.5 Within urban areas, churchyards are often among the few areas of greenspace where the local community is able to have some contact with the natural world.

Capacity of Cemeteries and Churchyards

- 12.6 The existing Harborough District plan suggests that many of the cemeteries in the district are nearing capacity and new sites may be required. It states that where existing cemeteries require expansion or replacement, planning applications will be granted on the successful meeting of criteria concerning the level of access, the provision of adequate parking and the development of suitable landscaping.
- 12.7 Research undertaken for this project supports the local plan, suggesting that a number of cemeteries have recently been filled. This may suggest that there is a need for additional sites within the district at present.
- 12.8 Consultation highlighted there is concern that the cemeteries in Market Harborough and Lutterworth are almost at full capacity and there are development pressures on a proposed site at Leaders Farm, this situation needs to be clarified.

Quantity

- 12.9 Harborough District Council have responsibility for the following cemeteries at present
- Market Harborough
 - Great Bowden
 - Foxton
 - Saddington
 - Great Easton
 - Blaston.

Setting provision standards

- 12.10 There are no definitive national or local standards for cemeteries and churchyards at present.
- 12.11 Consultation responses suggested that the level of provision is about right, in comparison to just 13 who felt that there was a deficiency. Additional consultation with Parish Councils suggested that a number of cemeteries are nearing capacity.
- 12.12 Overall within the district, there is a total of 40.27 hectares of provision, representing 0.53 ha per 1000 people. Provision within the rural areas per 1000 population is high.
- 12.13 PPG17 suggests that the development of quantity standards for churchyards is inappropriate. The annex of the PPG17 Companion Guide states that:
- “as churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standards which will be required is a qualitative one”.
- 12.14 In addition, it is recognised that every cemetery has a finite capacity; hence demand for cemeteries is steady. It is therefore suggested that if the application of a quantitative standard is required, this is calculated using a combination of population estimates and the average number of deaths resulting in a burial in the district. It is

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however suggested that this matter should be dealt with at district level, rather than applying a provision standard.

Quality

- 12.15 Overall, 84% of cemeteries and churchyards in the district are rated as good or very good quality and only 2% are considered to be poor. Of the 9 open space typologies, cemeteries and churchyards appear to be some of the highest quality sites.
- 12.16 There are in fact no cemetery and churchyard sites across the district rated as very poor.
- 12.17 Only two of the analysis areas, North East Rural and Western have cemetery and churchyard sites which are rated as poor. These sites are St Mary's Church in Ashby Magna and St Peter's Church in Horninghold.

Accessibility

- 12.18 The accessibility of cemeteries and churchyards within the district is good, with access to 46% of sites rated as very good, and access to a further 38% good. Only 7% of sites have poor access and no sites in the district have very poor access.
- 12.19 All sites within Peatling and Bosworth are rated good or very good.
- 12.20 Only two of the analysis areas, North East Rural and Western have cemetery and churchyard sites which are considered to have poor access. These are St Leonard's Churchyard in Misterton with Walcote and Withcote Chapel.

Catchment

- 12.21 Accessibility to cemeteries and churchyards is particularly important to enable relatives to visit sites. Consultees indicated that on the whole, they expect to live within relatively close proximity to a cemetery or churchyard.
- 12.22 A summary of key findings, including the median, mean, mode of responses are outlined in the table below.

Table 12.1 – Distance prepared to travel

	Accessibility – Parish Councils						75%
	Median	Mean	Mode	Min	Max		
Walk	10	11	10	3	20	15 minutes	
Cycle	9	9	10	2	20		
Bus	9	9	10	5	10		
Car	5	6	5	1	15	5 minutes	

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- 12.23 Responses were varied, with people indicating that they are willing to walk between 3 and 20 minutes, although both the median and mode were 10.
- 12.24 75% of Parish representatives are willing to walk up to 15 minutes. This type of open space provides a local facility for the local community to visit for quiet contemplation and nature conservation value.
- 12.25 Although a large proportion of Parish representatives expect to walk to a cemetery, it was felt that this may not always be realistic particularly in the rural area. 75% of representatives suggested that they were willing to travel up to 5 minutes in the car.
- 12.26 An accessibility standard of a five-minute drivetime is therefore recommended in table 12.2 below.

Table 12.2 – Recommended Accessibility Standard

Local Standard – Cemeteries and Churchyards	
Recommended Travel Time	Estimated equivalent distance
5 minute drive	2km

- 12.27 Although a car travel time is recommended, it is important to encourage other “green types” of transport, such as cycling.

Assessment of value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 12.28 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use¹ would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating. This is because the factors are related and interlinked.
- 12.29 There are a number of cemeteries and churchyards that are of high quality and high accessibility in addition to being well used. These sites are highly valued sites and should therefore be protected. Sites where accessibility and quality are both rated as very good and are well used include:
- Newton Harcourt Church St Lukes - Wistow
 - Churchyard - Medbourne
 - Arnesby Baptist Chapel - Arnesby

¹ Usage is determined by people visiting for various reasons such as for contemplation etc rather than number of burials

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- St Marys Churchyard - Broughton Astley
- Frolesworth Road Cemetery - Broughton Astley
- Sutton in the Elms Cemetery - Broughton Astley
- St Nicholas Churchyard - Frolesworth.

12.30 There are a number of additional well-used sites that are rated good, which also represent highly valued sites within the community.

12.31 The quality and accessibility of most cemeteries and churchyards in the district is good and usage is also high. There are no sites where there is high usage, despite poor or very poor quality ratings. This emphasises the importance of the condition and accessibility of the cemeteries and churchyards in determining their usage.

12.32 There are several sites where usage is relatively low despite good quality and accessibility of the sites. There remains however a requirement to maintain these sites. These include:

- Knaptoft Church Ruins and Garden
- Churchyard - (High Street) - Husbands Bosworth
- Saint Nicholas Churchyard - (closed) - Mowsley
- Mowsley Parish Burial Ground
- St Mary's Churchyard - Willoughby
- St Mary's Church - Bruntingthorpe
- Churchyard in Swinford
- Cemetery in Swinford
- Withcote Chapel
- St Lukes Churchyard
- All Saints Churchyard - Scraftoft
- St Andrews Church - Owston and Newbold
- Church and Churchyard in Hungarton

Summary

12.33 While it is inappropriate to set a quantity standard for cemeteries, there is a steady demand in the district and a number of existing burial sites are nearing capacity. This therefore suggests that the development of existing sites should be considered in the near future. Consideration should be given however as to why a number of good quality sites within the district remain relatively unused at present.

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- 12.34 The quality of cemeteries and churchyards is particularly important – many people use cemeteries and churchyards as amenity green space – for peace and relaxation. It appears that the quality of cemeteries and churchyards within Harborough is good and higher than the quality of sites in most other typologies. They should therefore not be considered priority for improvement. There are no sites with both poor quality and poor accessibility.
- 12.35 The accessibility of cemeteries within the district is also considered to be good, and consultation suggests that 75% are willing to travel up to 5 minutes in the car. Green modes of transport should also be encouraged.