Banstead Cemetery

Combined Planning & Needs Statement

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Proposal Ref: CDSL/1089
Introduction

This document, in combination with the Needs Statement and the Design and Access Statement, sets out why the development of a new cemetery at Banstead will not conflict with Government Policy on Greenbelt under the NPPF p.19.

In March 2012, the Government replaced a large amount of the planning guidance, including Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts, with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published on 27 March 2012. The NPPF sets out the Governments planning policies for England and how it expects these to be applied. It contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development which it defines as having three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Ministers Planning and Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) provided a clear planning policy framework and guidance for green spaces, including cemeteries and burial grounds (see www.odpm.gov.uk/planning and Annex A). This updated to the current NPPF guidance and states in para 82:

According to government, the green belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.¹

The CPRE describes green belts as a buffer between towns, and town and countryside whereby within their boundaries, damaged and derelict land can be improved and nature conservation encouraged.²

It is for local authorities to define and maintain green belt land in their local areas. The Government expects local planning authorities with green belts to establish green belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for green belt and settlement policy. Green belt boundaries can be altered as part of the Local Plan review process. Local Plans are the plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community.³

The Government guidance notes consider cemeteries and their associated buildings an “appropriate” use of greenbelt space³. This Statement therefore considers these issues in conjunction with the critical need for burial space in the Borough of Reigate and Banstead to justify the use of Greenbelt Land within Banstead as an appropriate use and an essential need.

1 Department for Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012, p19
2 CPRE website, Green Belts: breathing spaces for people and nature [on 9 January 2013]
3 Department for Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012
Background

Cemeteries and churchyards can be a significant open space provider and represent a relatively minor resource in terms of the land but they are able to provide areas of nature conservation importance via unimproved grasslands and other various habitats.

They are often among the few areas of green space where the local community is able to have some contact with the natural world and provide a secure buffer to further development and encroachment.

Cemeteries provide a useful resource for the local community. A wide variety of habitats can often be found supporting the other open space types such as areas of semi-natural and natural areas. Whilst a place for the laying to rest of the deceased, cemeteries provide an open space to be used on an opportunity-led basis – i.e. where there are churchyards and cemeteries there are opportunities for wildlife and use of the open space by the public for walking and relaxing.

The quality of cemeteries and churchyards remains particularly important – many people use cemeteries and churchyards as amenity green space for peace and contemplation.

The Cemetery at Banstead is designed with community interests in mind and will allow the public to enjoy and reflect in the open space and provide a legacy for future generations to appreciate the longer maturing landscape.

National, Regional and Local Need for Cemeteries

Burial space in the UK is becoming scarce at an ever increasing rate. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) has estimated that within the next 5 to 10 years 30% of UK local authorities will have run out of burial space.

In a recent BBC survey out of 358 local authorities surveyed a quarter said they would have no room in 10 years. Of the 358 authorities represented on a league table of the how much usage time was expected from their cemeteries, the adjacent borough of Tandridge Council was at the bottom with 0 years left; other neighbouring boroughs including Croydon were 4th from bottom with 1.5 years left closely followed by Mole Valley 3 years. Sutton anticipates their cemeteries will be full within 25 years and Epsom and Ewell are currently down to one operational cemetery with perhaps 20 years of provision.

The main council cemetery (Redstone) at Redhill is anticipated to be full within 12 years. Notwithstanding that this calculation only takes into account current rates of burial and does not allow for the increased borough housing growth, demand of the current ageing population, neighbouring borough shortages and increased ethnic requirements. The cemetery is also located to the southern boundary of the borough.
As it can take up to a minimum of 5 years to source and develop a new cemetery site, the communities with little or no burial space may be looking at neighbouring councils for burial provision. This will rapidly erode burial space within these boroughs. It is also understood that within the new development management policy document, cemeteries and crematorium are a future consideration.

Leatherhead cemetery alternatively used by Banstead and Reigate residents has suffered from severe flooding this year making it unusable. This further dilutes the opportunity for local burial provision.

The table below shows the bottom 50 authorities for future burial provision, highlighted are the neighbouring boroughs to Reigate and Banstead.

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<th>AUTHORITY</th>
<th>REGION</th>
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<td>Derby City Council</td>
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Demographics

The pressure on burial space is borne out by the councils own figures presented in the Core Strategy Document Section 3 (Borough and Characteristics).

Population Growth: The population of Reigate & Banstead has risen steadily over recent decades and is forecast to continue to do so. The Government predicts that the local population could rise from 138,600 residents in 2010 to 157,400 in 2023 and 171,100 residents by 2033 - an increase of more than 20% between 2010 and 2033.

An Ageing Population: Projections suggest that the number of older people (the over 65’s) in Reigate & Banstead could increase by 70% between 2010 and 2033, compared to an overall population increase of just over 20%.

Declining Household Sizes: Nationally, household sizes are declining. In the South East, it has been estimated that by 2028 the average household size will have declined to 2.22 from 2.35 in 2008. This predicted decline is linked to growth in the numbers of older people, the impact of relationship breakdown and an increase in single and child-free households.

A growing local population, together with an ageing population, means that there is a local need to plan for new housing growth and services in the borough.

With the combination of increased national and, more importantly, local population growth; the impending increase in death rate at the end of the “baby boomer” period and the higher weighting
of communities within the borough favouring burial for cultural and religious need, the pressure on Reigate and Banstead to deliver a cemetery is great.

Local Need

A survey was undertaken of 11 local funeral directors operating in a 5 mile radius of Banstead, who accounted for approximately 90% of funeral arrangements in the Banstead and Reigate area.

As the primary interest group, it was felt that an understanding of need could best be demonstrated by them.

The full details of the responses can be found in the appendix of this document but, in summary and without exception, all Funeral Directors interviewed were in favour of a new cemetery within the Banstead area on the basis of population need and travel time to the other regional cemeteries.

Of those interviewed, 60% felt the provision of extended burial services to include memorial gardens, a military section and woodland burials would be required; specifically woodland and natural burial as these were not supplied locally to address the need.

National Policy Specific to Cemeteries

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." This does not relate to a quantitative hectare per 1,000 population requirement.

Under para 89 NPPF guidance notes, it states a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- buildings for agriculture and forestry
- provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces
- limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; or
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.
The assumption is taken that if a building can be construed appropriate for a cemetery in greenbelt then arguably the cemetery itself would have been assumed to be acceptable and appropriate use of green belt. This is supported by significant cemetery planning applications being approved within greenbelt on a national level.

Local Planning Policy

The Surrey Structure Plan, Reigate and Banstead Local Plan (2005) and their detailed policies provide the framework for restraint on development within the countryside. Chapter 4 – Countryside, Policy CO1 provides guidance on the type of permissible development within the Green Belt. Part IV refers to cemeteries in the context of permissive development, “essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, in accordance with Policies CO7 and RE 8, for cemeteries or for other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it’. The value of green space provision within the Core Strategy Document is represented by the Green Infrastructure Strategy (GI), this is produced in balance with sustainable development and housing policies.

However, whilst the Core Strategy defines the needs of the community with regard to many key services, from housing, transport, leisure environment retail etc, there is the omission of future provision of burial services.

The core strategy document sets out the Borough’s provision and management of key services and infrastructure over the next 15 years e.g. until 2027 however estimations are that burial facilities within the borough will be exhausted within 12 years. Notwithstanding this calculation only takes into account current rates of burial and does not allow for the increased demand of the current ageing population, neighbouring borough shortages and increased ethnic requirements.

It was noted in the pre-app planning correspondence that specific considerations to relevant planning policies notably the core strategy document should be considered. Specifically the following policies will be reviewed as being appropriate to the development:

- **CS1 Valued Landscape and the Natural Environment**
- **CS4 Allocation of Land for Development**
- **CS8 Sustainable Developments**
- **CS10 Infrastructure Delivery**

The summary tables from the Boroughs Core Strategy Document are considered and the proposed cemetery development is considered in context to these policy summaries.

**CS 1 Valued Landscape and the Natural Environment**

1. In considering the allocation of land and/or proposals for significant development, the Council and developers will be required to protect and enhance the borough’s green fabric.
   a. The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a landscape of national importance and therefore will be provided with the highest level of protection. The same principles will be applied to protect the Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) as an
important buffer to the AONB and to protect views from and into the AONB, until such time as there has been a review of the AONB boundary.
b. All other areas of countryside outside of the AONB, (and AGLV whilst it remains in force) have their own distinctive landscape character which will be protected and enhanced. The borough’s commons will be maintained and enhanced for the benefits of farming, public access and biodiversity.
c. The Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment Special Area of Conservation (SAC) will be afforded the highest level of protection in line with European legislation. Proposals for development that is likely to have a significant effect on the SAC, alone or in combination with other development, will be required to demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.
d. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and ancient woodland will be protected for their biodiversity value and where appropriate enhanced.
e. Urban green spaces, green corridors and site specific features which make a positive contribution to the green fabric and/or a coherent green infrastructure network and will, as far as practicable, be retained and enhanced.

2. A robust and defensible Green Belt will be maintained to ensure that coherence of the green fabric is protected and future growth is accommodated in a sustainable manner.

3. The Council will work with a range of partners to promote, enhance and manage a substantial network of multi-functional green infrastructure across the borough, to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits of the borough’s green fabric.

The proposed site falls outside nominated sites of special importance e.g. AONB, SAC, AGLV, SSSI, LNR’s and SNCI’s. The site does however fall within the Metropolitan Green Belt, as defined by Reigate and Banstead’s Core Strategy documents (2012). It is felt that the development of a cemetery will not detrimentally affect the landscape character keeping the open space protected from any future urban sprawl.

Cemeteries generally enhance wildlife and biodiversity by providing shelters and increasing the variation in plant and habitat opportunities.

The proposed cemetery has majored on increasing the bio-diversity and enhancing wildlife development with the implementation of wildflower area, increased indigenous tree and shrub planting and the introduction of wetland and water features.

The introduction of these measures will provide extensions to the existing wildlife corridors and are in line or exceed the ecologists recommendations for enhancing and improving bio-diversity fitting neatly with the Site of Nature Conservation Importance to the south west.

It is felt that the design of the cemetery and its buildings are in keeping with the current landscape; natural falls and topography are utilised within the design, structural elements such as memorialisation, shelters and path infrastructure adopt a sensitive and subtle approach.

The materials for roads and paths have been selected to be soft and eye and foot whilst still providing a durable wearing surface for vehicles.
A footpath runs through the southern boundary of the site the quality of the footpath will be enhanced in areas of high footfall.

Views from the adjacent properties will not be adversely affected by the development as they too will be screened by trees and extended hedgerows.

**CS 4 Allocation of Land for Development**

The Council will prioritise the allocation of land for, and delivery of, development in sustainable locations as set out below.

**Short to medium term (up to 2022)**

1. **Priority locations for growth and regeneration (of equal priority):**
   - Redhill town centre.
   - Horley town centre.
   - Horley North East and North West sectors.
   - Preston regeneration area.
   - Merstham regeneration area.
   - Other regeneration areas as identified by the Council and its partners.

**Throughout the plan period**

2. **Built up areas of Redhill, Reigate, Horley and Banstead:**
   - a. Town centres first, then
   - b. Edge of centre locations within walking distance of town centres.

3. **Other sustainable sites in the existing urban area, according to the criteria for sustainable development set out in Policy CS8.**

**Beyond 2022**

4. **Sustainable urban extensions may be required. The precise scale and location of these will be determined through further study guided by the criteria for sustainable development set out in CS8 and consideration of landscape character and sensitivity.**

**Areas of search will include:**

- a. Those areas of land that have a realistic chance of being developed (not covered by constraints such as AONB) and are not within proximity of the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment (to avoid any urbanising impact on the SAC).
- b. Those areas which adjoin the urban area and are accessible to existing public transport/service provision.
- c. Those areas of land

The cemetery development would form part of the sustainable development planning strategy by providing the burial need of an expanding and ageing population whilst being developed outside of the highly sensitive green Infrastructure. This need has currently not been considered within the Core Strategy Proposal but stakeholder and demographic need highlight its importance.

**CS 8 Sustainable Developments**

“The Council is committed to ensuring that development will create places and spaces that are well designed and meet the needs of today and tomorrow, but not at the expense of the future.”
Development will:
1. Make efficient use of land, giving priority to previously developed land and buildings within the built-up areas.
2. Be at an appropriate density, taking account of and respecting the character of local area and levels of accessibility and services.
3. Contribute to the creation of neighbourhoods which are supported by effective services, infrastructure and transport options and which are designed to be safe, secure and socially inclusive.
4. Protect and enhance the green fabric, and respect and contribute to the borough’s green infrastructure network.
5. Respect the ecological and cultural heritage of the borough.
6. Minimise the need to travel, whilst increasing opportunities to walk, cycle or use public transport, including as part of the green infrastructure network.
7. Minimise the use of natural resources, and contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, by re-using existing resources, maximising energy efficiency and renewable energy production, minimising water use, and reducing the production of waste, including through sustainable construction methods.
8. Be designed to minimise pollution, including air, noise and light, and to safeguard water quality.
9. Be designed reflecting the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change (for example higher temperatures, increased flooding, increased pressure on water resources, impacts on ecology and built heritage and impacts on ground conditions).
10. Be located to minimise flood risk, through the application of the sequential test and where necessary the exceptions test, taking account of all sources of flooding including fluvial, surface water and reservoir failure, and manage flood risk through the use of SuDS and flood resistant/resilient design features, and where necessary provide floodplain compensation.

The criteria within this policy, along with Policy CS4, will guide the appraisal of options for urban extensions.

Whilst not considered an Urban extension in the sense of a housing or commercial infrastructure it is recognised that the introduction of a cemetery developed environment may constitute a development of some significance.

It is felt the development does fulfil the objectives of sustainable developments and fulfils the council’s policy on meeting the needs of today and tomorrow and not at the expense of the future.

The cemetery will recognise the points above specifically

- through efficient use of land,
- respecting the character of the local area through sensitive design and providing increased public access to open space previously inaccessible
provides for a community driven socially inclusive service through multi-cultural burial and service provision

is sensitive to the green fabric and GI

will increase the ecological and bio-diversity of the area and provide the public with greater access to the open space

buildings will be built from sustainably sourced materials and will blend with the green fabric

is situated and built with flood risk and environmental issues in its design criteria

These points are key to fulfilling the sustainable policies within the Core Strategy Document

**CS 10 Infrastructure Delivery**

*The Council will:*

1. Secure contributions from new development towards the infrastructure required to meet the needs created by the new development.

2. Secure appropriate infrastructure ahead of, or alongside, the delivery of new development.

3. Encourage proposals that would:
   
   a. increase the range, improve the quality, or enhance the accessibility, of community and leisure facilities in the borough, and/or
   
   b. provide for a mix of compatible community services on a single site, including through consolidation to result in economies of scale or innovative forms of service provision.

4. Secure green infrastructure in line with its Green Infrastructure Strategy to include provision of new open space and or improvements to existing open spaces, the provision of and/or improvements to links between open space, and measures to link new and existing developments with open space.

5. Resist the loss of existing leisure and community facilities and open spaces, unless it can be demonstrated that such a need no longer exists, or alternative provision is being made.

6. Seek provision and maintenance of leisure and community facilities and open spaces from new development.

Delivering development sustainability is a main theme of the core strategy proposal of specific relevance is the reference to the Green Infrastructure.

“Green Infrastructure: A key local feature of our infrastructure requirements is the green infrastructure network which will be established in the borough linking existing, locally distinctive large areas of green space. The GI network will comprise linked, multi-functional, green spaces protecting and enhancing opportunities for biodiversity, recreation and general amenity. The Council will work in partnership with public, private and voluntary sectors to develop and maintain a GI Strategy that seeks to address”:


b. Biodiversity.

c. Climate change (adaptation and mitigation).

d. Access to nature.

e. Accessibility.
f. Health and well-being.

The development of a new Cemetery at Banstead fulfils and is compliant with many of these key objectives. The cemetery will be funded by private equity providing for community requirements at no expense to the council or rate payer.

The facility will offer services to provide for a range of cultural, social and financial needs. With burials for all faiths and choices of formal and natural burials.

The site will be open for the public to use as a site of rural recreation and enjoy the landscape surrounds, the large expanses of natural planting and redevelopment of un-improved grassland will provide increased bio-diversity with the introduction of native wildflowers and shrubs to help protect the habitats of endangered local species.

The service building will provide a facility for community use and is designed with sustainable materials in a way empathetic to the surrounding countryside.

**National Planning Policy**

In the introduction the NPPF defined those parameters for Greenbelt requirement which are defined

1. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Addressing these parameters by default the Burial Act (1852, 1857) ensures interred burials cannot legally be removed or interfered with without consent from the Home Office, this will ensure that points 1 to 3 will be fulfilled as the cemetery by statute of law will prevent the future development on its land without special consent from the government.

Cemeteries are axiomatic of the rural character of villages and towns, cemeteries are a cultural and religious means of disposal of the deceased and in some faiths a legal requirement.

**Site Selection**

A significant review has been undertaken on the need for a cemetery at this location (see needs statement), the site location falls within the metropolitan green belt.

In parts of Banstead and Reigate the council has undertaken a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). It is felt that this proposal will ensure that the green belt and open space is retained and that the site may be more appropriately considered as a buffer to prevent further development to the east of Banstead.
The site whilst in the Metropolitan Green Belt is surrounded by areas less suited for development due to the high sensitivity; these areas include SSSI, Site of Nature Conservation Importance, Site of Potential Nature Conservation Importance, AONB and Areas of Great Landscape value.

It is felt that the site would provide a buffer for any further development as well as a link to some of the areas of nature conservation importance with an increase in the planting of indigenous trees and enhancement of wildlife areas within the cemetery.

**Summary**

Without the development of a new cemetery in the borough, bereaved people will lose the choice of a local burial facility.

It is known that the bereaved prefer to be interred in the vicinity of their home. If no further development occurs at Redhill, the only option for residents of Reigate and Bantsead is to move outside the borough.

The development provides a sustainable long term solution to burial within the borough providing a range of burial options and choices.

The design allows for significant enhancement and protection of the ecology and improvement of the bio-diversity of the current site.

The development will increase public access to the green belt that has been otherwise inaccessible.

Within the context of the local and national planning policies for green belt development, the cemetery building and landscape proposals would have limited visual impact on the wider local area, with the existing perimeter hedgerows and proposed woodland assisting the screening of the building and parking areas from the majority of the identified visual receptors.

The boundaries to local properties can be effectively mitigated to maintain filtered long distant views. It is considered that the proposals would be appropriate to their surroundings, with several nearby commercial buildings, including agricultural buildings, a plant nursery and stables. The facilities building is single storey and positioned at a lower level on the site. In the longer term it will be substantially screened by planting.

The loss of the existing hedgerow whilst significant has been compensated for by the large area of proposed woodland. A number of trees will be selected for retention and accommodated within the proposal. This would maintain biodiversity whilst the new woodland and additional planting is establishing.

The development of this site as proposed, with the suggested mitigation measures in place is considered to be an appropriate development in landscape terms within the metropolitan green belt.

With regard to Local and National Policy requirements it is felt that the development of a cemetery provides an appropriate, sensible and pragmatic solution to the shortage of burial space in line with
local and national policy without significant or detrimental impact on the openness of the landscape character whilst enhancing and preserving the ecology and bio-diversity of the site.

The site would provide a good example of a private development working within the interests of the community and council’s core development strategy.