

BROOKWOOD CEMETERY MASTERPLAN

Executive Summary

A Masterplan and an Experience Plan for Brookwood Cemetery were commissioned in 2019, following the preparation of a Conservation Management Framework in 2016. During the Master planning process a Members Briefing was held on 26 February 2020 and a visit to the cemetery was organised in June 2019. The overall vision for the cemetery sets it as an exemplar - an example of a sustainable working cemetery leading the way for other heritage cemeteries. It would achieve this as a restored heritage asset, a visitor destination and public amenity, bringing people to experience the cemetery as a cultural destination and showing them its qualities as a place of rest.

The strategy to realise this overall vision comprises five steps of development. Each of these builds on the last to enhance the cemetery environment, raise its profile and increase its usage. The five Masterplan steps are:-

- Ongoing tasks – Everyday maintenance and repair particularly relating to landscape management and structural repair.
- Initial moves – Small scale improvements, for example enhancement of the old railway line route.
- Long Term additions – Building and associated landscape development, for example highways work and new tree avenues.
- Expanded programme – Exhibition space and a programme of activities associated with the heritage of the cemetery.
- Museum – Create a visitor destination.

The Masterplan and the Experience Plan set out a number of broad policies by which the site will be managed in the future. Consultation was carried out with all stakeholders and organisations connected with the cemetery. Support for the Masterplan has been expressed by Historic England, the major stakeholder with responsibility for giving permission for much of the work which takes place on site, particularly to the historic fabric. The Masterplan spans the ecological and environmental issues of the cemetery, its historic significance and monuments and historic landscape and its current use today as a working cemetery. The Experience plan explains the future planning for how the cemetery will be used by a range of visitors.

The adopted Masterplan and the Experience Plan will be the formal documents by which the Brookwood Cemetery site is managed whether by contractors, staff or volunteers. An Action Plan will be produced to guide future management.

Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL That

- (i) the Brookwood Cemetery Masterplan, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be formally adopted; and**
- (ii) the Brookwood Cemetery Experience Plan, as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be formally adopted.**

Reasons for Decision

Reason: The Masterplan and the Experience Plan have been the subject of extensive research and consultation and are supported by major stakeholders.

The item(s) above will need to be dealt with by way of a recommendation to Council.

Background Papers: None.

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Date Published: 18 March 2020

1.0 Introduction Site Context

1.1 Brookwood Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Western Europe and a designated Grade 1 listed heritage asset. It is currently on the Heritage At Risk register following decades of neglect prior to its purchase by Woking Borough Council in 2014. Woking Borough Council have undertaken significant work over the last 5 years. This includes public and staff safety works, building restoration – notably the Colquhoun Chapel and the Cemetery Walls, landscaping and drainage improvements including the lake in the Glades of Remembrance, new acquisitions of buildings including The Superintendent's Lodge and Rose Garden Cottage (Kosegarten), works to improve the visitor experience including signage, toilets and a Visitor Lodge and increased income generating opportunities such as the creation of a new burial plot and Mausoleums. The Council is now looking to the next 30 years and the work of restoration and improvement which remains to be done. In consultation with Historic England and The Heritage Fund it was agreed a Masterplan would be important to guide the future development of the cemetery.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 The Masterplan and the Experience Plan have been developed in dialogue with a core advisory group, including Brookwood Park Ltd, Historic England, Woking Borough Council Planning and Surrey Highways. The overall vision for the cemetery and a strategy for achieving this have emerged through briefing and consultation. The major approaches taken in the Masterplan and Experience Plan which have been consulted on include:-

- Managing the landscape (woodlands and heathland, drainage, pathways).
- Restoring the line of the original railway and improving the approach to the cemetery.
- Planning the development of future burial areas.
- Expanding opportunities for funerary income generation.
- Stitching the North and South cemeteries together through improved pedestrian and vehicle accesses on Cemetery Pales to create through visitor routes.
- New tree avenues and glades.
- Creating a Visitor Centre.
- Improved parking and welfare facilities.
- Creating a circular walking route around the cemetery.
- Continuous restoration of monuments.

2.2 During the research and development stage consultation sessions were held at the cemetery attended by major faith groups, the Friends of Brookwood Cemetery, local residents, CWGC, Historic England, Surrey Historic Buildings Trust, and Surrey Wildlife Trust. Proposals were discussed and alterations made which considered comments and opinions raised. A number of key points for assimilation were identified and subsequently incorporated. There was broad support for proposals to improve car parking on site and access to graves. Significant support for the ongoing programme of historic building and monument restoration. Support for improvements to the cemetery entrance from Brookwood station and on traffic calming for Cemetery Pales. Consultees emphasised the importance of the ecology. Concern was expressed that the special nature of the cemetery might be changed by increased visitor numbers and this has been referenced in the Masterplan and Experience Plan.

Brookwood Cemetery Masterplan

- 2.3 Support was indicated for the continuing improvement of woodland management, the introduction of new rides and walks and the maintenance of natural heathland areas on the edge of the cemetery. The problems with damaged and deteriorating monuments was acknowledged and support received for an ongoing programme of repair as funds allow.
- 2.4 Preparation of the Masterplan identified a number of issues and opportunities relating to the site – lack of knowledge of the cemetery, its scale but apparent lack of visibility, poor access, the opportunity for improved interpretation, the difficulty of crossing Cemetery Pales, the ongoing need for monument repairs, the constant need to improve drainage. These have all been covered in the present Plan.
- 2.5 All stakeholders have now agreed and supported the Masterplan and the Experience Plan.

3.0 Implications

Financial

- 3.1 An annual budget is currently set aside for the ongoing maintenance of the site and to cover many of the issues identified in section 2 above. Further exceptional works will need approval for funding before proceeding.
- 3.2 Significant parts of the Masterplan and Experience plan recommendations could be met from external grant funding and the creation of the Masterplan is the first stage in making these applications.

Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.3 The Experience Plan makes recommendations for further staff posts if a visitor centre is to be created. A staff training plan is already in place for current maintenance staff.

Community Safety

- 3.4 None.

Risk Management

- 3.5 If a Masterplan is not in place there is a reputational risk to WBC as there would be a lack of clarity for major stakeholders such as Historic England as to how WBC proposes to deal with the Heritage At Risk status currently in place. Inappropriate management could lead to action by Historic England.

Sustainability

- 3.6 A Sustainability Impact assessment has been completed.

Equalities

- 3.7 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

Safeguarding

- 3.8 None.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Brookwood Park Ltd.
- 4.2 Brookwood Cemetery Society.
- 4.3 Woking Borough Council Planning.
- 4.4 St Edward Brotherhood.
- 4.5 Guildford Diocese.
- 4.6 Surrey Wildlife Trust.
- 4.7 All faith groups on site in the cemetery.
- 4.8 Historic England.
- 4.9 CWGC.
- 4.10 Beard Construction.
- 4.11 Surrey Highways.
- 4.12 Pirbright Parish Council and local residents.
- 4.13 Woking History Society.

REPORT ENDS.