



South Bristol Cemetery Expansion

Expansion of existing cemetery and crematorium to provide new burial and memorial plots with associated roads, footpaths, parking, drainage infrastructure, fencing, landscaping and furniture.



Statement of Community Involvement

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1. Introduction

Proposals are being brought forward by Bristol City Council, as developer, for the expansion of South Bristol Cemetery. Details of the proposals are provided in the supporting planning documents. In advance of the planning application the Council has engaged with a number of stakeholders, groups and organisations with an interest, details of which are provided within this report.

2. Bristol City Cabinet

The project proposals were taken to Bristol City Council's 3rd March 2020 Cabinet meeting for approval. Reports are published in advance of Cabinet meetings and members of the public are able to raise questions or make statements. None were received in respect of the Cemetery proposals. Links to the papers are provided below:

<https://democracy.bristol.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=19933&PlanId=0&Opt=3#A116600>

3. South Bristol Councillors

An email summarising the development proposals was sent to all Bristol City Council Councillors representing wards within South Bristol in June 2021. One Councillor contacted the project on behalf of a resident with concerns about the quality and security of the existing baby burial area; as the enquiry related to existing operational provision this was passed to the Cemetery and Crematorium Manager to review and agree any appropriate action.

4. Publicity in local press

The planned expansion of South Bristol Cemetery was publicised in an article in Bristol 24/7 as follows: [Shortage of burial plots sees Bristol cemetery set for £1.4million expansion - Bristol Live \(bristolpost.co.uk\)](#)

5. Neighbourhood Planning Network

The Neighbourhood Planning Network were contacted in June 2021. The NPN advised that they had no residents' groups that cover South Bristol Cemetery and recommended contacting:

- **Bristol Tree Forum**
- **Bristol Parks Forum**
- **Avon Wildlife Trust**

The above groups were contacted as part of engagement of ecological interest stakeholders detailed within section 6.

6. Ecological Interest Stakeholders

The proposed extension areas to the west of South Bristol Cemetery are located within Colliter's Brook Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). In recognition of this the development sought to engage with ecological interest stakeholders.

6.1 Bristol Parks Forum

The Bristol Parks Forum were contacted and included the following text in their update to parks groups in July 2021:

“South Bristol Cemetery Expansion

There are plans to expand the South Bristol Cemetery as there is only circa 12 months of remaining capacity at South Bristol Cemetery for non-denominational burials within areas presently allocated for burials. The expansion would be onto adjacent fields previously designated for cemetery use in the site's 1969 planning approval. The Council wants to consult with interested groups ahead of ahead of a proposed submission of a certificate of lawful development. Part of the area earmarked for expansion fall within the bounds of the Colliter's Brook

SNCI. The Council say “An ecological assessment has been undertaken by Wessex Ecological Consultancy and we have been liaising with internal BCC Ecologist to identify suitable ecological design proposals and mitigation measures, which we are finalising ahead of seeking further input through consultation.” Bristol Parks Forum has been approached to find out whether we would be interested in taking part in this process. If you would like to get involved either as an individual or with your group please let us know.”

No members of the Parks Forum came forward to express an interest in engaging with the project.

6.2 Avon Wildlife Trust

The Council’s Ecological Emergency Project Manager contacted Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) on the development’s behalf in July 2021. AWT responded that they did not have capacity to engage with the Project and recommended contacting ‘My Wild Bedminster’ (details of engagement in section 6.3 below).

AWT consequently made an enquiry to Bristol City Council’s Mayor’s Office in November 2021 regarding the submission of the certificate of lawful development application (later withdrawn). The project responded to the Mayor’s Office that the previous invitation to AWT to engage with the project remained open. AWT were copied into communication with other ecological stakeholders in February 2022 and invited to join an ecology site visit held in May 2022, which they were unfortunately unavailable to attend. No direct communications or comments have been received from AWT.

6.3 My Wild Bedminster

My Wild Bedminster were invited to engage with the development in July 2021 and the following article was included within the Bedminster Wildlife News, which is circulated to a range of individuals and groups interested in ecology within South Bristol:

Proposals for South Bristol Cemetery Extension

Bristol City Council have been developing proposals to extend South Bristol Cemetery to allow continued provision of burial services in the South of the City. The proposals include some works within the Cemetery to utilise new areas for burials alongside works to improve quality of existing burial and memorialisation areas. Alongside this the proposals include the development of new burial areas within fields adjacent to the cemetery that fall within the boundaries of the original cemetery planning approval.

Part of the cemetery extension area falls within the Colliter's Brook SNCI and the Council appointed Wessex Ecological Consultancy to assess the impact of the works and propose mitigation and enhancement measures for the project to adopt. A set of draft measures have been identified within the project's ecology report, which include retaining all existing hedgerows; retaining the most species rich areas of grassland; planting new native hedges around the boundaries of new burial areas; new tree planting; and development of a large new pond to be planted to maximise its benefit for wildlife. The Council is interested in engaging with individuals and groups within the South Bristol area who would be interested in inputting into further development of the ecological mitigation and enhancement measures.

If you would like to receive additional information on the project, or would be interested in engaging with the project, please contact Oliver Roberts, Project Manager for Bristol City Council at oliver.roberts@bristol.gov.uk. It is expected that engagement will initially be in the form of a Zoom/Teams meeting to review and discuss proposals.

No requests for additional information, or expressions of interest were received as a result of the above article.

6.4 Bristol Tree Forum

The Bristol Tree Forum were contacted in July 2021 and expressed an interest in engaging with project. Detailed information on the proposals, including design information and ecological reports were issued by email and a first site visit was held in November 2021 to walk across the site and review proposals. A second site visit was held in May 2022, which included the owner of the adjacent Yew Tree Farm (see section 7.2), the project ecologist Rupert Higgins and a Bristol City Council Ecologist.

Key points arising from emails and the site visits are:

Certificate of Lawful Development Application

The Bristol Tree Forum questioned the appropriateness of use of a Certificate of Lawful Development application which relied on the original South Bristol Cemetery planning consent that covered the proposed expansion areas. The Council withdrew the Certificate of Lawful Development application and has submitted a full planning application, which the statement forms part of.

Ecological Assessments and Net Gain

Copies of ecological assessments were provided to the Bristol Tree Forum to review. The Bristol Tree Forum asked about whether the project would be undertaking a net gain assessment, it was discussed that based on the nature of the development a quantitative only assessment taking account of total areas of habitat types pre- and post-development would not be able to provide a biodiversity net gain and the project was therefore seeking to engage on identifying a range of more qualitative mitigation and enhancement measures, which are summarised below and taken account of in the ecological assessment report provided as part of the application.

Expansion Area 1

- New native hedge planting was welcomed.
- Discussion on opportunities for additional tree planting led to the number of new trees proposed in area 1 being increased significantly from 16 to 46.
- Discussion on potential removal of the existing overgrown Leyland Cypress hedge between site 1 and the existing cemetery. It was recommended by the Tree Forum that the Leyland Cypress were treated as trees. The development proposals only cover removal of a restricted section of these trees at new entrances into the site from the cemetery, including increasing visibility between the two sites at the main entrance.

Expansion Area 3

- Protection of existing hedgerows agreed, an extended arboricultural survey was undertaken in Summer 2022 to support this. Requested an updated flora survey and bat survey for this area, which was undertaken in Summer 2022 and included in the updated ecology report.
- New native hedge planting was welcomed.
 - o Discussion on opportunities for additional tree planting led to the number of new trees proposed in area 3 being increased significantly from zero to 37.
- Potential for phasing of works was discussed. The extent of works undertaken in area 3 as part of the first phase of works will consider opportunities for managing the land for ecological benefit prior to commencement of burials alongside the requirements for infrastructure to be constructed as part of these works.

Site Drainage and Area 4

- Requested consideration of retaining use of existing outfall and consider utilisation of existing Network Rail drainage to scale of drainage works require and potentially mitigate need for new attenuation pond. It was assessed that the drainage proposals were necessary to comply with West of England Sustainable Drainage guidelines.
- Protection of existing hedgerows agreed, an extended arboricultural survey was undertaken in Summer 2022 to support this. A single drainage run is required through an existing hedge, the remainder of runs use existing openings.
- Requested an updated flora survey and bat survey for this area, which was agreed and undertaken in Summer 2022 and included in the updated ecology report.
- Discussed that attenuation basin will be designed to maintain water levels and planted to enhance ecological interest.
- Agreed that a contractor's method statement will be produced ahead of the drainage works to ensure that they minimise impact to the SNCI.

Existing South Bristol Cemetery Site

- Comments on the existing cemetery site were passed to the operational team and the ecology report has adopted a recommendation for the Council to create an action plan for enhancements within the existing site.

7. Site Neighbours

7.1 Elm Farm and Ponderosa, Bridgewater Road, Bristol.

Elm Farm is adjacent to area 1 of the proposed South Bristol Cemetery expansion land. The owner of Elm Farm previously leased land from the Council which included all land (Areas 1, 3 and 4) which are proposed for expansion of the site. Ahead of termination of the lease in June 2021 details of the proposed use of the land as a cemetery were provided and a site meeting held. The site meeting was also attended by the owner of the adjacent plot named 'Ponderosa' (the plot includes the house and the privately owned part of the field adjoining Area 1. It was asked if an access track could be created between the yard area of Elm Farm and the field owned by Ponderosa, however that could not be accommodated within the designs. It was discussed that a hedge would be planted on the boundary line between area 1 and the part of the field owned by Ponderosa. It was confirmed that the cemetery proposals would not include Bristol City Council owned land which form part of the yard area of Yew Tree Farm. No other comments were received.

7.2 Yew Tree Farm

Up until June 2021 Yew Tree Farm sub-leased land comprising part of the proposed expansion land (areas 3 and 4) from Elm Farm for cattle grazing. A site meeting was held in May 2021 with the owner of Yew Tree Farm to discuss the proposals for the cemetery expansion and the potential for Yew Tree Farm's ongoing temporary use of the proposed expansion land for cattle grazing from June 2021 onwards. Agreement was provided for Yew Tree Farm's temporary use of the Council's land for grazing until such time as development proposals are finalised and/or any formal grazing licence is put in place covering the expansion land and wider land that falls outside of the expansion proposals.

The owner of Yew Tree Farm highlighted reports of otter sightings on Colliter's Brook to the project in September 2021 and in response the project's appointed ecologist undertook an otter survey in October 2021, which is included in the submitted ecology assessment.

The owner of Yew Tree Farm has also been copied into wider communications with ecology stakeholders and attended a site visit in May 2022, which included the Bristol Tree Forum, the project ecologist Rupert Higgins and a Bristol City Council Ecologist. Questions were asked alongside those from the Bristol Tree Forum about drainage proposals, existing hedgerows and contractor method statements, which are reflected in the summary details provided in Section 6.3 covering Bristol Tree Forum input.

8. Engagement with Funeral Directors

Bristol City Council have a database of registered Funeral Directors within the Council boundary which contains contact details and addresses. The database was filtered to define those that are within the vicinity of South Bristol Cemetery and Crematorium and thus likely users of the site; this resulted in the selection of 38 Funeral Directors, who were contacted in February 2021 to take part in an online survey and telephone interviews. Of the 38 Funeral Directors contacted within this study, 30 responses were received (13 from online surveys and 17 from telephone interviews).

The survey and interviews covered both the existing site and options for consideration in the design of the proposed expansion areas. Responses on options for burial plots identified demand for double plots, which has been reflected in the selection of the sites for expansion where ground conditions allow double burials. 42% of the Funeral Directors recommended that a dedicated memorial/contemplation garden should be incorporated on site, which has been allowed for within the design of area 1. Feedback on ash internment and memorialisation options have also been incorporated in the design of area 1 alongside feedback on baby burial provision, which was further informed by engagement with SANDS (See section 9). 74% of the Funeral Directors considered that car parking provision was good and designs for Areas 1 and 3 have therefore been based on supplementing existing provision to provide provision suitable to the extended areas with a key focus on sufficient disabled parking spaces.

9. Engagement with SANDS (Stillbirth and neonatal death charity)

The existing section of South Bristol Cemetery dedicated to babies is nearing full capacity and the project has engaged with SANDS a stillbirth and neonatal death charity to plan for and design future provision.

A first meeting was held in July 2021 to consider design principles and review the potential for extension of the existing provision within the South Bristol Cemetery site. Following review it was assessed that new provision should be incorporated into the designs for Area 1 and a second meeting was held in September 2022 to review and refine detailed design proposals.

The input of SANDS has been integral to shaping the design of the new provision considering journeys and how space allows families and friends to grow with their grief and how the setting and space provides for different needs, including those of siblings.

10. Conclusion

This statement of community involvement has outlined how the proposed development has undertaken focused engagement with key stakeholders, with a particular focus on ecological interest, bereavement, and neighbouring properties. The development sought wider engagement, including through contact with Bristol's Neighbourhood Planning Network, Bristol Parks Forum and South Bristol Councillors. The development has sought to take account of all comments provided to address the ongoing shortage of burial provision within Bristol so that the Council are able to continue to provide its citizens with an essential service in an appropriate setting. The expanded facility has sought to secure input on appropriate ecological enhancements to offset impacts from the cemetery expansion, to allow the development of new provision that will be able to serve the community for the long-term and assist those who will encounter bereavement.