

Cemeteries and churchyards

Definitions

- 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. A secondary purpose is the promotion of wildlife conservation and biodiversity.

Picture 12.1 All Saints Church, Mountfield (Site ID 380)



Strategic context and consultation

- 12.2 Some churchyards retain areas of unimproved grasslands and other various habitats. They can make a significant contribution to the provision of urban green space, sometimes providing a sanctuary for wildlife in urban settlements and often providing historic context to rural landscapes.
- 12.3 The Local Plan recognises the important role that churches can play in community life however it focuses more upon their indoor facilities rather than their outdoor facilities. The Local Plan also identifies a westward extension needed to Bexhill Cemetery in order to prevent the facility reaching capacity within two to three years.
- 12.4 Only eight respondents selected this typology as the open space they used most regularly. Of those eight respondents, two drove, two walked, one cycled and three used public transport.
- 12.5 The three most significant issues were: vandalism and graffiti and poor maintenance. Dog fouling and the mis-use of sites were seen as minor issues. In order to improve the safety of sites, respondents stated they would like to see staff on site.

Setting provision standards

Quantity standard

12.6 No quantity standards have been set for Cemeteries and Churchyards. PPG17 Annex states *"as churchyards can only exist where there is a church, the only form of provision standard which will be required is a qualitative one."*

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUANTITY STANDARD

No local standard to be set

12.7 For Cemeteries, PPG17 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.

Quality standard

12.8 There are no national or existing standards for the quality aspect of cemeteries and churchyards.

12.9 Respondents from the household survey wanted cemeteries and churchyards to have well kept grass with seating, flowers/trees, parking facilities, to be dog free areas, have toilets and to be litter free. These key quality factors alongside other consultations have been the basis of the quality standard for cemeteries and churchyards.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL QUALITY STANDARD

"Sites should provide an area of quiet contemplation and an opportunity to enhance biodiversity. Sites should be well kept, with a variety of flowers, trees and shrubs. Seating and litter bins should be provided where appropriate. Sites should have well defined boundaries and appropriate lighting to discourage misuse. "

Accessibility

12.10 There are no definitive national or local standards for cemeteries and churchyards with regards to accessibility.

12.11 There is no realistic requirement to set catchments for cemeteries and churchyards as they cannot easily be influenced through planning policy and implementation.

RECOMMENDED LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY STANDARD

No Local Standard to be set

Applying provision standards – identifying geographical areas

12.12 Given that it is not appropriate to set any local quantity or accessibility standards it is also not appropriate to state areas of deficiency or need.

SECTION 12 – CEMETERIES AND CHURCHYARDS

- 12.13 Cemeteries and churchyards, although needed for the burial of the dead provide an open space to be used on an opportunity-led basis. In other words, where there are cemeteries and churchyards, there are opportunities for wildlife and use of the open space by the public for walking and relaxing.
- 12.14 It is however important to consider the quality and accessibility of cemeteries and churchyards. Providers should strive to achieve the quality vision set for all churchyards and cemeteries.

Value assessment

- 12.15 It would be wrong to place a value on cemeteries and churchyards focusing solely on quality, accessibility and usage. The wider benefits are also important. In addition to offering a functional value, many cemeteries and churchyards also offer heritage, cultural and landscape benefits.
- 12.16 In some instances, particularly in rural settlements, a churchyard may be the only formal open space provision and hence is a focal point of the village. It should be the priority of the Council to consider improving the quality of sites in rural areas where no park or garden or amenity green space exists. It is realised that this may prove problematic as churchyards are typically not under Parish or District Council control. Such areas have been identified within Section 9.

Summary of recommendations for cemeteries and churchyards in Rother

CC 1	Adopt the quality standard for all sites in the district.
CC 2	Encourage site owners to increase the accessibility of sites to local residents.
CC 3	Council to prioritise improvements to sites where the churchyard is the dominant open space in the village.