

14 January, 2014

Willenhall Lawn Cemetery Extension feasibility study

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr A Harris – Leisure and Culture

Executive Summary:

To provide a report on the investigations currently undertaken into the viability of extending the existing Willenhall Lawn Cemetery onto the adjoining site as indicated on the attached drawing number (HM657/General Layout/002) and consider any associated risks.

Reason for scrutiny:

The Willenhall Lawn Cemetery extension feasibility study has been identified as part of the Scrutiny Panel's work plan for 2013/14.

Recommendations:

That subject to any comments Members may wish to make the report be noted.

Background papers:

The attached drawing number (HM657/General Layout / 002) shows the approximate area of the proposed works. Additional reports undertaken have been tabulated below.

Resource and legal considerations:

The extension to the existing cemetery will require Planning approval and as part of the planning process a number of reports will need to be undertaken.

Citizen impact:

None directly from this report, however the provision of additional burial plots would address the local demand.

Environmental impact:

Members of the Scrutiny panel have expressed interest in the proposed project and referred to previous flooding on the site. Concern has been expressed that if this development is to be permitted that it should not worsen any likelihood of any future flooding in the immediate locality. This is addressed in the report below.

The provision of additional burial plots would require considerable site clearance and loss of well established trees and foliage which may have an ecological impact and is addressed in the report.

Performance management:

None from this report.

Equality Implications:

As part of the original bid for the funding of this scheme an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken.

Consultation:

Considerable consultation has already been undertaken as part of the initial design including discussions with; Planning, Landscape architects, Conservationist, Development Control, Rights of way Officer and Structures. The consultation process will be extended to others once the reports from the ground investigation and Environmental Agency have been undertaken and as with all planning applications consultation will be undertaken with any adjoining residents and schools.

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1.0 Report

- 1.1. On 21 February 2013 Council approved the investigation of extending the existing cemetery to allow for the expansion of Willenhall Lawn Cemetery. The existing cemetery is nearing capacity and the consideration to extend this further is being developed. Willenhall Lawn Cemetery lies to the west of the borough and was opened in 1966 to accommodate the burial requirements of the borough residents in the area. The original cemetery was extended in the early 1990s to provide additional burial ground.
- 1.2. The amount of suitable available burial land within the existing boundary has diminished with usage. In order that new adult burials may continue for many future years it is necessary to take steps to develop an adjacent piece of land to the east of the existing cemetery. This land is in the Council ownership but is very overgrown.
- 1.3. At the current rate of use, the available space to offer new graves at Willenhall Lawn Cemetery will be exhausted by approximately December 2016 ie. in three years time. Should the council wish, consideration may need to be made for future burials. The service currently undertakes an average of one hundred full adult burials per year. If no further burial provision is made by the end of 2016, it is anticipated that the bereaved in the west of the borough, wishing to have a new grave in a Walsall Council cemetery, would have to use either the North Walsall or Streetly cemeteries.
- 1.4. In order to validate the proposed use of this land for cemetery purposes a feasibility study is being carried out in 2013/14 to establish the work required to enable burials to take place there. This work covers the requirements of the Environment Agency along with ecological and established access considerations. The data from the feasibility study together with a proposed layout and landscaping design may be part of a future full planning application.
- 1.5. The proposed scheme is to examine the potential of extending the available burial land at Willenhall. Such provision will be subject to positive recommendations from a feasibility study currently being undertaken. In addition a successful future planning application and the allocation of sufficient capital funding will be required.
- 1.6. It is estimated that, if undertaken, the new extension will provide sufficient burial space for approximately forty years at the current rate of burial. The area identified for the extension is currently overgrown and unused. The cemetery development will have the added advantage of also improving that aspect of Bentley Lane in this area.
- 1.7. An initial assessment of the feasibility to extend the cemetery was undertaken by officers from the Council's Engineering and Transportation service and a preliminary design has been produced which is now being used for undertaking further ground investigations.

1.8. Some reports have already been commenced including:-

- 1.8.1. Topographical survey – To carryout detailed design
- 1.8.2. Drainage survey - To assess the existing drainage infrastructure and determine any additional capacity
- 1.8.3. Report on treatment of the Japanese knotweed now 85% completed
- 1.8.4. Arbocultural survey to BS5837:2012 – To assess the species and condition of all the trees on site
- 1.8.5. Ecological report – To determine any protected wild life and mitigate against any unnecessary site clearance which could have an adverse affect on the environment

1.9. In order to provide access and egress to the proposed extended cemetery a new access is being considered. From the initial discussions with the development control team this appears feasible subject to some minor modifications to the existing bus lay-by and the requirement for a traffic assessment report.

1.10. Further to the above, a number of additional reports to accompany the planning application are being undertaken. These include an understanding of the ground stability and contamination / ground water position on the site and an environmental assessment including an intrusive ground and mining investigation, testing and ground water monitoring, flood risk assessment and outline surface water drainage strategy. This investigation has been commissioned by OPUS International and is scheduled to be completed by early January 2014.

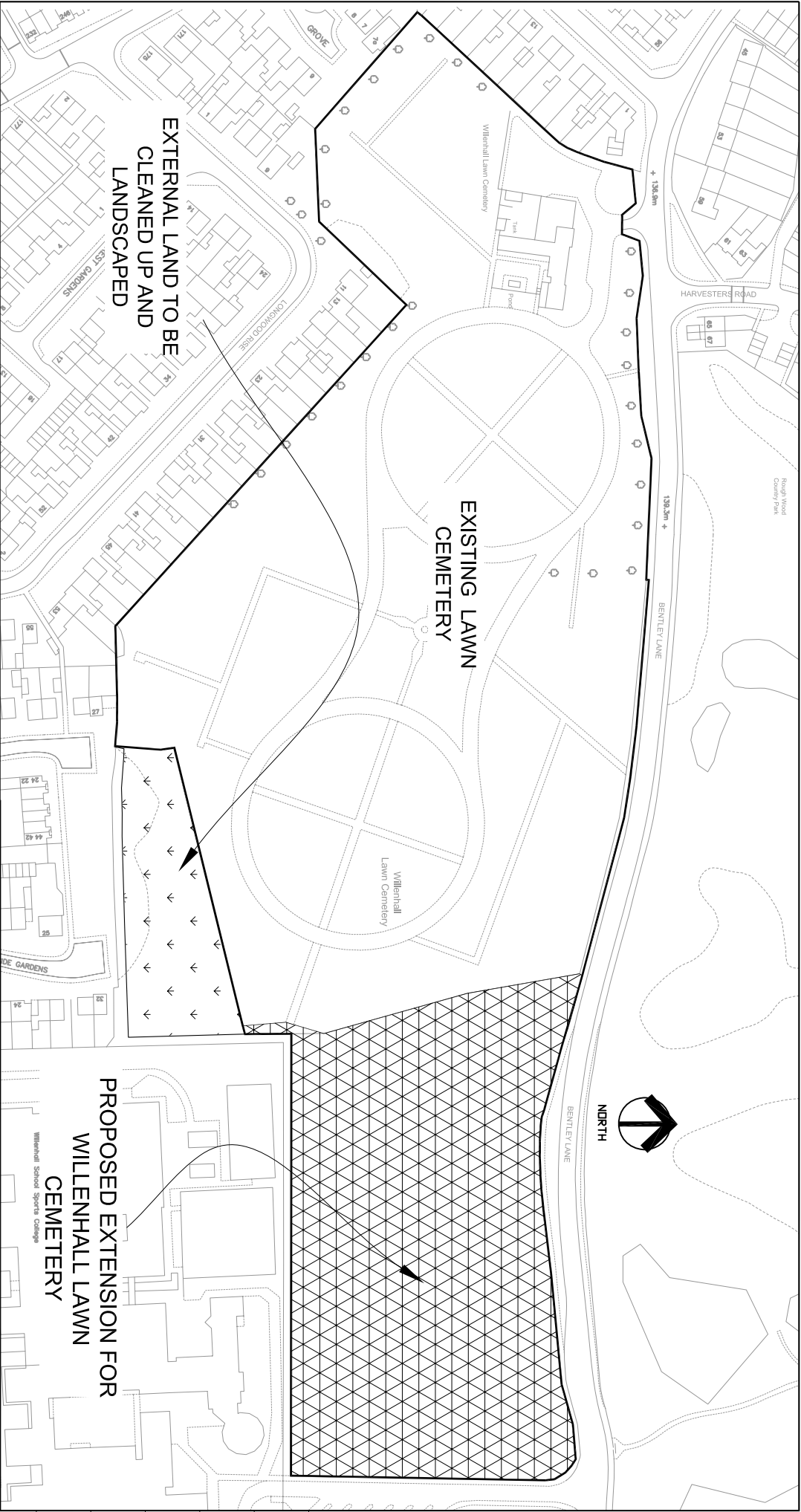
1.11. There are three Definitive Public Rights of Way footpaths across the site and a formal surfaced “Safer Routes to School” path. In addition to these there are several worn tracks which may hold unrecorded public rights. The Public Rights of Way Team are seeking advice from Legal Services as to potential routes across the site that would have the least likelihood of objections to ensure the delivery of a final scheme.

1.12. Members will recall their concerns regarding the drainage of any new burial area. A drainage survey has been commissioned by OPUS and will take into consideration the existing and future demands on the drainage system.

1.13. The panel also had concerns regarding previous flooding on the existing site and possible exacerbation to this should the development be permitted. In order to address this concern, as part of the ground investigation, OPUS have been commissioned to undertake a full flood risk assessment and solution to address the drainage requirements.

1.14. The provision of additional burial plots would require considerable site clearance and loss of well established trees and foliage; this could have an impact on the nesting season therefore the timing of any works will need to be done in conjunction with the conservation team. Along with this, phasing of the works will also need to be considered to ensure that any wild life has the opportunity to migrate to the new areas being proposed as

part of the landscaping proposals.



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Walsall Council

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MAJOR PROJECTS AND MINOR IMPROVEMENTS

JOB		WILLENHALL LAWN CEMETERY	
TITLE		LOCATION PLAN	
DRAWN	C.A.K	DRAWING NO.	
CHECKED	Nov 2013	HM657/GENERAL	
DATE		LAYOUT/002	
SCALE	1:2000		

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