

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S  
REPORT TO CABINET**

**Cabinet**  
**09 June 2021**

**Report Title:** Proposed Extension to Newcastle Crematorium Grounds and Development of Adjacent Land off Chatterley Close

**Submitted by:** Executive Director Commercial Development and Economic Growth

**Portfolios:** Environment and Recycling; Finance, Town Centres and Growth

**Ward(s) affected:** Bradwell directly; All indirectly

**Purpose of the Report**

For Cabinet to consider:

- the outcome of the consultation process, following its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020,
- the observations of Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 in respect of the consultation responses received,

in respect of extending the grounds of Newcastle Crematorium into adjacent land within the Council's ownership, and developing the remainder of the adjacent land for residential use with associated green infrastructure and community facilities.

**Recommendation**

**That Cabinet**

- 1. Consider the comments received following consultation with appropriate stakeholders along with observations received from the Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny (FAPS) Committee**
- 2. Agree to allocate space for the Crematorium extension and direct officers to look at options to finance the associated extension scope of works**

**Reasons**

To ensure that Newcastle Crematorium can continue to meet the needs of the residents of the Borough for a further 30 years and that the Council's land assets, where appropriate, are used to facilitate the meeting of identified housing, community facility and green infrastructure needs to encourage economic growth.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Newcastle Crematorium, situated on Chatterley Close in Bradwell, was opened in 1966. As well as the crematorium building and offices, it consists of extensive grounds which have been laid out in phases over the last 50+ years to accommodate the burial of cremated remains and various forms of memorialisation, including small headstones, benches, trees, shrubs and scattering of ashes into lawned areas.
- 1.2 The grounds are now nearing capacity for burials and memorialisation and it is considered appropriate to seek to extend them onto an adjacent open space, which is in Council ownership, thus creating additional capacity of an estimated 30 years. The extension would take up approximately 2.64ha of the adjacent 6.77ha site, leaving approximately 4.13ha which currently contains a children's play area, MUGA, and general amenity open space.
- 1.3 The Council's Open Space Strategy, adopted in March 2017, identifies this site as suitable for master- planning to facilitate alternative uses and in September 2018, Cabinet approved the commissioning of a study to explore this. Consultants were appointed and a Vision and Viability Appraisal was produced. The study was completed in July 2020 and concluded the following:—the site offers the opportunity to extend the crematorium whilst creating new play and recreational facilities in the retained green spaces and the development of new homes. The crematorium shall expand into the site, improving its access and movement as well as providing space for new memorial gardens. The green infrastructure would cover almost 40% of the residential area of the site. It would accommodate an enhanced and refurbished play area and MUGA, develop new ecological habitats, retain the existing woodland and re-provide green space. The remaining site would provide the opportunity to build high quality homes.
- 1.4 Cabinet at its meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 considered a report setting out the proposals to extend crematorium grounds and develop adjacent land off Chatterley Close.
- 1.5 The Finance, Assets and Performance Scrutiny Committee at its meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021 considered the consultation responses and provided observations for Cabinet to consider.

## 2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The proposed extension to the crematorium grounds would consist of boundary treatments (railings/hedges/gates), a new egress road facilitating a one way access and egress system, additional car parking, footpaths, drainage, hard and soft landscaping and associated minor structures. The estimated capital cost of this scheme is approximately £1.3 million, inclusive of fees and it is proposed to fund this from the capital receipt gained from the disposal of the remaining land.
- 2.2 Memorialisation is a popular choice for bereaved families at the crematorium and a range of modest options are currently offered for sale or lease by the Council, including small headstones, benches, trees and shrubs. However, it is anticipated that there may be a latent demand for further options in this area and it is therefore proposed to commission a feasibility study to explore the market and determine the range that could be incorporated into the layout of the extended grounds. The estimated cost of this study is approximately £14,000 and it is proposed that provision

of this amount is made in the General Fund Capital Programme/Borough Growth Fund in 2020/21.

- 2.3 The existing play area and MUGA on the site is aged and in need of updating to reflect current needs in relation to play and recreation for children and young people. The masterplan provides the opportunity to facilitate this as part of a comprehensive site redevelopment and improvement.
- 2.4 The masterplan provides for 98 new homes with a mix of 35% two bedroom houses, 45% three bedroomed houses and 20% four bed houses and 25% affordable housing. These are only indicative figures and would be firmed up during the planning process. Newcastle-under-Lyme's 5 Year Housing Land Supply Statement 2020-2025 states that the minimum number of homes required is 356 per annum. These 98 homes, if built, would contribute to this figure.
- 2.5 In accordance with the Asset Management Strategy 2018-21 the public and ward Councillors have been consulted on this proposal. There have been 153 responses, set out below is a summary of these responses (the detailed responses form part of the appendices). In addition a petition of over 1700 signatures, has been received, objecting to the land being built on and wanting it to be retained as local community green space. It should be noted that the petition was electronic and did not contain any addresses or signatures (full petition can be viewed in the appendices).
- 2.6 Set out below are the summary of the public comments:

Summary of comments	Outcome of desktop assessment and response to consultation comments
The local school Bursley Academy have no objections to the proposed development and they currently have capacity as they have had a classroom extension	No response required
Insufficient facilities/ infrastructure overload – The doctor's surgery and dentist are already under strain as is UHNM, The nearest doctors are in Wolstanton and Chesterton. A new high school is required	These issues will be considered at the planning stage
Loss of green open space which is used by the local community for play, rambling, socialising and dog walking	The masterplan proposes an improved children's play area and MUGA
The land was donated to the people by George Poole to be used in perpetuity	There is no evidence within the deeds that this is the case
Only green space left in the community, residents particularly the elderly will have to drive to a green space to exercise or walk the dog – impacts on the carbon footprint of the area	There is a green space opposite this site and it is located very close to Bradwell Woods
Wildlife will have nowhere to go	

<p>Roads already very busy, extra housing will make it worse and increase traffic congestion and pollution</p> <p>Bradwell is already overdeveloped</p> <p>The lack of green space will impact the residents mental, psychological and physical health</p> <p>Residents views will be affected/overlooked Reduce value of adjacent properties – expects compensation</p> <p>Increase in anti-social behaviour as children won't have a place to go to burn of excess energy</p> <p>There must be brownfield Council sites that could be developed for Housing</p> <p>Environmental vandalism</p> <p>Given the climate crisis and threatened biodiversity we should be planting more trees not removing then</p> <p>Open space was left around the Crematorium to allow for odours to dissipate – the smell can be offensive if the wind is blowing in the right direction</p> <p>The land is adjacent to a small reservoir and there are water mains that run through the site</p> <p>Poor public transport</p> <p>I moved into Chatterley Close fully aware of the proximity of this public facility, and also fully aware that time would require its expansion. If that time is now, so be it</p>	<p>This will be considered at the planning stage</p> <p>This will be considered at the planning stage</p> <p>This will be considered at the planning stage</p> <p>There will be a new play area provided and there are other areas to walk nearby</p> <p>Not considerations in view of the wider public interest, nor is this a planning consideration</p> <p>A children's play area is being re-provided</p> <p>The Council is not developing greenfield sites as opposed to brownfield ones.</p> <p>This will be considered at the planning stage</p> <p>A tree survey would be commissioned for submission with planning application</p> <p>Regular checks are carried out on emissions as part of EHO licencing as well as there being an independent annual emission check</p> <p>This has been considered in the masterplan and will also be considered at the planning stage</p> <p>No response required</p> <p>No response required</p>
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2.7 The primary aim of the consultation was to identify any issues that might prevent the site from proceeding to a stage where more detailed development proposals are worked up for consideration. It is believed that no such issues have emerged from the consultation process. As the table above shows, some of the responses are concerned with perceived impacts on views and prices of existing residential properties. Whilst these concerns are understood, there is a need to balance these concerns with the wider public interest requirement of making adequate provision to meet interment and memorialisation needs. This proposal presents opportunity to do that whilst minimising the impact on the public purse and making a contribution to the borough's housing needs. All of the other issues raised are more properly considered through the planning process where there can be a detailed evaluation of each concern in light of specific scheme proposals which will include measures to mitigate any harm identified.

2.8 A summary of the comments received from the FAPS committee are set out below:

Scrutiny recognises that this is an ongoing process of consultation about the proposals but requests Cabinet to consider the set out below:

- Request the undertaking of a traffic survey to identify any measures to address and improve traffic issues in the area
- Work with existing local groups and organisations to identify any possible areas of compromise for example whether there can be a reduction in the capital receipt so that it only generates sufficient funding to cover the crematorium extension and public open space provision
- To directly engage with residents on the issues raised through the consultation process in recognition of the difficulties in responding to a consultation during a pandemic
- Confirm the position regarding the existing 7 sites of green space mentioned during the consultation.

### 3. **Proposals**

3.1 Following consultation with appropriate stakeholders and FAPs Committee that Cabinet consider the comments received.

3.2 The rationale for the extension to the existing facility is based upon lack of remaining space for interment of cremated remains and any new site selected away from the present location would require a large level of investment, such as a new Chapel of Rest and new Crematory. The present site has received large amounts of investment into the crematory and associated equipment over the past few years. For these reasons the extension option proved to be the best value for money for any further investment. Additionally residents who have interred ashes of relatives at the site will be able to opt for any future interments at the same location.

### 4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 To ensure that Newcastle Crematorium can continue to meet the needs of the residents of the Borough for a further 30 years and that the Council's land assets, where appropriate, are used to facilitate the meeting of identified housing, community facility and green infrastructure needs to encourage economic growth.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 The Vision and Viability Appraisal explored a number of options before arriving at the current proposal.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Council has a duty, both fiduciary and operationally to utilise its Assets for the benefit of the community.

6.2 Local Government Act 1972 – Section 123 - the Council has a duty to achieve best consideration for its assets.

6.3 Local Government Act 2000 - powers to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the Borough

6.4 The Council is a Burial Authority and has a duty to ensure the safe burial and cremation of the deceased. It currently operates Newcastle Crematorium as part of this duty.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 Not applicable at this stage.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

8.1 The financial appraisal which formed part of the commissioned Masterplan estimated the capital receipt for the residential development land to be in excess of £2.5m. This is based on the assumption that there are no abnormal costs relating to the site and Covid does not have an impact moving forward on land values.

8.2 It is estimated that £100,000 is required to cover the fees for commissioning consultants to prepare and submit a planning application and any associated reports.

8.3 The estimated capital cost of the works to extend the crematorium grounds is approximately £1.3 million inclusive of fees. It is proposed to fund the work from the capital receipt gained from the sale of the residual land.

8.4 The cost of the various fees associated with the seeking of planning permission and the preparation of a business case for memorialisation options will be derived from the capital programme.

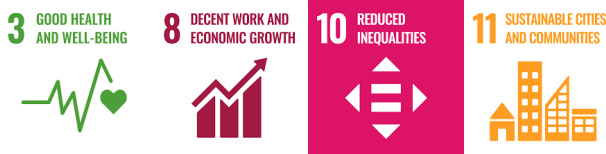
8.5 This would result in an estimated residual capital receipt of approximately £1.2 million, subject to the assumptions above.

## 9. **Major Risks**

- 9.1 As the consultation responses demonstrate, there will be resistance to the proposals. To try to accommodate all of the concerns raised, and best balance the public and private interests, the master-planning process for the site will consider the issues raised and how to best address them. The proposals seek to find a way to extend the Crematorium so that the needs of the local community can be met for the next 30 years, deliver community benefits and needed housing within the locality. Without development within the Borough the Council would need to find additional resources to provide the additional Crematorium space.

## 10. **Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 This project will ensure that Newcastle Crematorium can continue to meet the needs of the residents of the Borough for a further 30 years and that the Council's land assets, where appropriate, are used to facilitate the meeting of identified housing, community facility and green infrastructure needs to encourage economic growth. The project supports the realisation of the following UNSDG objectives:-



## 11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 This is referred to in the forward plan

## 12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

- 12.1 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 – Asset Management Cabinet report  
12.2 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 - Cabinet report

## 13. **List of Appendices**

- 13.1 Copy of all responses  
13.2 Petition <http://chnq.it/Qwrb58vh>

## 14. **Background Papers**

- 14.1 Masterplan of the site

