

Earley Town Council

Statement on Mays Lane Cemetery

Residents may be aware that for some time Earley Town Council has been looking into how it can provide more space for burials and the interment of ashes at Mays Lane Cemetery. The cemetery currently has areas for burials, Muslim burials, the interring of ashes, as well as the scattering of ashes in its Memorial Garden. However, in common with many cemeteries and burial grounds across the country, space is limited and the number of new plots available is decreasing. Whilst it's always difficult to predict demand, it is estimated that there is currently up to two years' supply of new plots available.

The Town Council planned to expand the cemetery into the adjoining land to the east and commissioned experts to conduct numerous surveys and tests to assess its suitability for use as a burial space and ensure that it met all legislative requirements for such use prior to any planning application being submitted. Whilst the land met the environmental criteria, its previous uses, prior to it coming into Earley Town Council's ownership, has resulted in large amounts of concrete and rubble being found under the surface. Very significant remedial works would be required to make the ground suitable for the receiving of burials and the concrete and waste arising from these works would need to be removed from site.

Expert advice was sought and, although very expensive, a way of remediating the land was found. Unfortunately, further investigations showed that the onsite roads could not withstand the weight and number of construction vehicles that would be required to carry out such works. Those familiar with Mays Lane Cemetery will know that it is bordered by the railway line to the south and the A3290 to the north and the only vehicular access is at the western end, off Mays Lane - and the only vehicular access to the proposed expansion land would be through the existing cemetery. The fact the site is bordered by the railway and embankment makes it impossible to bring those roads up to the standard required to accommodate the traffic needed to extend the burial site. All options have been thoroughly explored but regrettably Councillors have agreed that the provision of additional land for burials will not be possible.

Earley Town Council has, however, agreed that the land to the east of the current burial ground will be used to provide additional space for the interring of cremated remains and will be attractively landscaped to provide additional Memorial Garden space and areas of contemplation. Whilst the Town Council is disappointed that it will be unable to provide extra new burial space in addition to what it already has in the current cemetery, it will at least be able to provide an option for the many families choosing cremation.

The Town Council is working to ensure that all spaces available for new burial plots in the current cemetery are identified and made available for use. We also wish to reassure families who already have loved ones interred at the cemetery that the option to have a second burial in a grave will continue unaffected and that Earley Town Council will continue to maintain and care for Mays Lane Cemetery in perpetuity.

23/7/25