

Policy Committee Decision Report

Title of Report:	Citywide Cemetery Plan
Date of Decision:	10 th September 2025
Report To:	Strategy and Resources Committee
Report Of:	Ajman Ali – Executive Director, Neighbourhoods
Report Author:	Ellie Fraser - Head of Bereavement & Coronial Services

Executive Summary:

This report presents the strategic plan for future cemetery provision in Sheffield, aligned with the appended City-Wide Cemetery Plan. The Strategy and Resources Committee is asked to agree this strategic direction and confirm its continued oversight of the programme.

The report outlines the significant size, scale, and cost implications of delivering this plan, while reaffirming that the Council is not under a statutory duty to provide cemetery services. Nonetheless, the Council has committed to maintaining and expanding burial provision in response to community need and public health priorities.

Updated analysis estimates that citywide burial provision will be exhausted in approximately 5 to 7.5 years, with existing Muslim burial space estimated to run out in approximately 3 years unless the urgent interim measures proposed in this report are not supported. These measures include the redesign and development of remaining space at City Road Cemetery, which early modelling suggests could create an additional 60 to 80 graves. This would extend Muslim burial capacity by at least 6 to 12 months, taking overall capacity to an estimated 3-4 years. The report sets out how quickly these measures can be delivered and provides assurance that they are being prioritised.



Since March 2025, substantial progress has been made in identifying and assessing potential new cemetery sites. Six shortlisted locations have undergone ecological and groundwater assessments, and while the sites are not named in this report due to commercial confidentiality, they collectively offer sufficient land to meet the projected requirement of a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hectares. Most of these sites are in Council ownership and currently tenanted. Initial contact has been made with tenants, and these conversations are ongoing. Work continues with tenants to establish the practical and legal next steps before the sites can be made public. This includes provision for dedicated Muslim and natural burial space, as well as associated infrastructure.

The next phase of work will involve finalising feasibility outcomes, prioritising sites for development, and commissioning further assessments where needed. A detailed programme plan will be developed, including timelines, design work, costing models, and a communications and consultation strategy. It is anticipated that new cemetery sites may take up to three years to become operational, with prioritisation guided by urgency of need. The next report to Committee is expected within the next three months, providing a clear update on progress and next steps.

This report provides a robust and evidence-based framework for addressing Sheffield's burial space challenges and offers a clear and accountable pathway for delivery through the Council's governance arrangements.

Council Plan outcomes:

[Great neighbourhoods that people are happy to call home](#)

[People live in caring, engaged communities that value diversity and support wellbeing](#)

Policy Committee remit:

This report is to be considered by the Strategy and Resources Policy Committee as its remit includes:

- Cross-cutting responsibility for development and submission to Full Council for adoption of the Budget and Policy Framework
- Providing strategic direction to the operation of the Council by developing and recommending the Corporate Plan (including determination of the priorities set out therein) to Full Council and making decisions on cross-cutting policies and practice where such decisions are not reserved to full Council

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? No



Recommendations:

The Strategy & Resources Committee is asked to:

- 1) Note the contents of this report, including the updated burial space analysis and the progress made since March 2025 in identifying and assessing potential new cemetery sites.
- 2) Agree the strategic plan for future cemetery provision in Sheffield as set out in paragraph 2.1.2 and the appended Citywide Cemetery Plan and endorse the continuation of work to secure and deliver new cemetery sites that meet the city's long-term needs.
- 3) Acknowledge that while the Council is not under a statutory duty to provide cemetery services (as outlined in section 8.2), it will assume statutory responsibilities for any cemeteries it chooses to operate under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order.
- 4) Support the urgent interim measures proposed at City Road Cemetery to extend Muslim burial capacity by an estimated 6 to 12 months.
- 5) Recognise the significant size, scale, and cost of investment required to deliver the Citywide Cemetery Plan, including the projected need for a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hectares of new burial land and associated infrastructure.
- 6) Note that the six shortlisted sites have undergone initial feasibility assessments and collectively offer sufficient land to meet projected requirements, with site names withheld in this report due to commercial confidentiality.
- 7) Endorse the next phase of work as set out in section 2.2.4, including the development of a detailed programme plan, further feasibility assessments, and a clear timeline for delivery, with the next report to Committee expected within three months.
- 8) Confirm that the Committee will retain strategic oversight of this programme through the Council's governance arrangements, ensuring transparency, accountability, and alignment with community needs and Council priorities.

Financial Implications: No - Approved by: Adrian Hart

Legal Implications: Yes - Approved by: Nadine Wynter

Equality and Engagement Implications: Yes – Adele Robinson

Climate Change Implications: No - Approved by: Lisa Firth

Background Papers: S&R Committee report 19th March 2025 ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Strategy and Resources Policy Committee, 19/03/2025 14:00](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1: City-Wide Cemetery Plan



1. Background to the issue

- 1.1 Sheffield is facing increasing pressure on burial space. A comprehensive assessment of the city's existing cemetery estate, including burial activity, population forecasts, and ground conditions has established that without intervention, Sheffield will face a citywide shortage of burial space within the next few years. Updated analysis estimates that citywide burial provision will be exhausted in approximately 5 to 7.5 years, with existing Muslim burial space estimated to run out in approximately 3 years unless the urgent interim measures proposed in this report are put in place. Five cemeteries are already closed to new burials, and seven more have very limited space. The south and southeast of the city are particularly affected, with Beighton, Intake, Norton, Burngreave and Darnall already closed, and City Road, Handsworth and Woodhouse expected to close within two years. Cemeteries in the north, including Stocksbridge, Ecclesfield and Burncross, face considerable pressure due to very limited space. When a cemetery is closed to new burials, it means no new graves are available. Only second interments or first interments in pre-purchased graves can take place.
- 1.2 In response to these challenges, monitoring is taking place on a three-monthly basis to ensure that burial space data remains accurate, and the council is developing a long-term Cremation and Cemetery Services Strategy and has committed to maintaining and expanding burial provision. This commitment was endorsed by the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee and Strategic Leadership Board in December 2023. Since then, significant progress has been made, including a citywide public consultation, the formation of a cross-party Task and Finish Group, and the identification of potential new cemetery sites.
- 1.3 In March 2024, a citywide public consultation was conducted to understand residents' expectations for future cemetery services. Nearly 3,000 responses were received, highlighting priorities such as environmental sustainability, faith-specific provision, and improved facilities.
- 1.4 In summer 2024, a cross-party Task and Finish Group was convened. This group explored what the future of the council's cemetery and cremation services should look like and how it should be delivered. The group produced 80 strategic and operational recommendations to inform the future service provision, including new cemeteries.
- 1.5 On 4th December 2024, a petition was presented to Full Council highlighting the urgency of the situation, particularly for Islamic burials. The Council unanimously resolved to refer the matter to the Strategy and Resources Committee (S&R), which added it to its Work Programme.

- 1.6 A report to S&R in March 2025 outlined early progress, including collaboration between Council departments (Property, Planning, Ecology and Bereavement Services) to assess the feasibility of new burial space. A shortlist of potential sites was identified, with ongoing efforts to evaluate land availability, accessibility and environmental factors.
- 1.7 The Council has reviewed best practice from other local authorities and is actively monitoring the Law Commission's work on reforming burial and cremation law. This includes potential changes to grave reuse, reclamation, and new funerary methods.

2. Proposal

2.1 Establishing Sheffield's Citywide Cemetery Requirements for the Future

- 2.1.1 The appended City-Wide Cemetery Plan sets out a strategic plan for future cemetery provision in Sheffield. This plan is informed by a robust evidence base, including burial activity data, population forecasts, community consultation, and national good practice. It responds to the urgent need for new burial space and sets out a long-term framework for inclusive, accessible, and sustainable cemetery services.
- 2.1.2 The plan aligns with the principles of the draft Cremation and Cemetery Services Strategy, which sets out the Council's approach to delivering bereavement services over the next 25+ years. Together, these documents provide a coherent and future-focused direction for service planning and delivery.
- 2.1.3 To deliver the requirements, set out in the Citywide Cemetery plan, the Council will need to provide the following:
- **Burial Land:** a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hectares of new burial space, plus additional land for associated infrastructure such as roads, parking, service buildings, and other operational facilities.
 - **Geographical Distribution of Provision:** Four to six new cemeteries, geographically distributed across the city to meet future demand and ensure equitable access for all communities.
 - **Dedicated Muslim Burial Provision:** 4.5 to 9 hectares of dedicated Muslim burial space, either through a separate cemetery or designated sections within new sites, in recognition of religious requirements and community feedback.
 - **Dedicated Natural Burial Provision:** Dedicated natural burial space, reflecting growing public interest in environmentally

sustainable options.

- **Environmental Design Principles:** The integration of environmental awareness into cemetery design, including biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, and climate-sensitive planning.
- **Modernised Service Offer:** A fit for purpose service offer, with infrastructure and facilities tailored to each site to enhance customer experience, generate income to support site management, and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- **City Road Cemetery:** An immediate programme of work to explore the redesign and development of remaining space at City Road Cemetery, to ensure continuity of Muslim burial provision over the next few years while new sites are brought forward.
- **Development of Stocksbridge Cemetery:** An immediate programme of work to explore the development of Stocksbridge Cemetery, to future-proof provision in the far north of the city and respond to localised need.

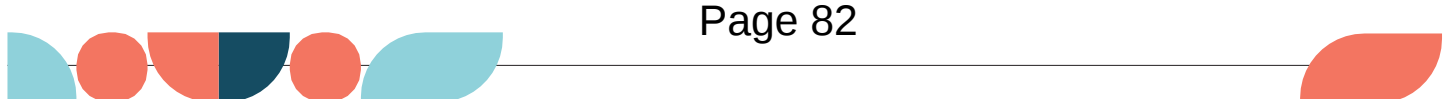
2.1.4 While no funding is being requested through this report, the Committee should note that delivering the Citywide Cemetery Plan will require significant financial investment, as outlined in Section 7.

2.1.5 Additionally, as set out in Section 8 of this report, the Council is not under a statutory duty to provide cemetery services. However, should it choose to operate new cemeteries, it will assume statutory responsibilities under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order (LACO).

2.2 Progress Towards Securing New Burial Provision in Sheffield

As noted in the report to this Committee in March 2025, since the Council's commitment in late 2023 to maintain and expand burial provision, a cross-service working group has led a coordinated effort to identify and assess potential cemetery sites. This included reviewing all Council-owned land over five acres, evaluating existing cemeteries for extension, and considering additional proposals from partners. Site visits and a standardised appraisal process helped refine a shortlist of viable locations based on planning, ecological, and operational factors.

2.2.1 Since March 2025, further progress has been made:



- A dedicated Project Coordinator has been appointed to lead the programme.
- Preliminary Ecological Assessments (PEAs) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) baseline surveys have been completed at six shortlisted sites.
- Tier 1 Groundwater Risk Assessments have been initiated at the same six sites, in line with Environment Agency requirements.
- A review of existing tenancy arrangements is underway to understand the practical and legal steps required to repurpose Council-owned land for cemetery use.

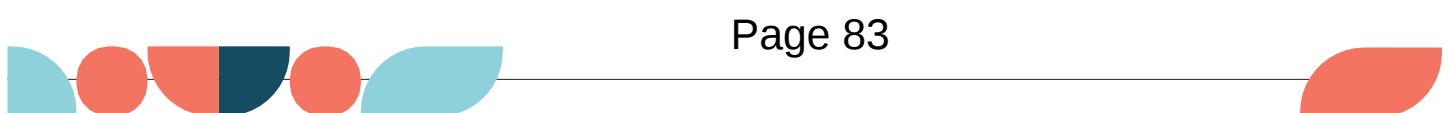
2.2.2 These activities reflect a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to securing new burial provision. The Council continues to engage with key stakeholders, including faith-based organisations and community groups, to ensure future provision is inclusive, sustainable, and aligned with Sheffield's long-term needs.

2.2.3 The next phase of work will involve:

- Collating all feasibility outcomes to establish the viability of each site.
- Determining a priority order for development based on feasibility, demand, and strategic fit.
- Commissioning further feasibility work where needed, including Tier 2 groundwater assessments and legal reviews.
- Developing a detailed programme plan, including timelines, communications and consultation strategy, design work, and costing model development.
- Considering alternative sites if the current shortlist is found to be unsuitable.

2.2.4 The Citywide Cemetery Plan also sets out indicative delivery timescales and a phased approach to development. It is anticipated that new cemetery sites may take up to three years to become operational, depending on feasibility outcomes, planning requirements, and site-specific constraints. Prioritisation will be guided by urgency of need, with initial focus on the southeast of the city and areas with high Muslim populations, followed by the southwest and far north.

2.2.5 These actions form part of a structured and transparent approach to securing new burial provision in Sheffield. The Council remains



committed to engaging with stakeholders and communities throughout the process and will continue to report progress to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

2.2.6 The following table sets out the indicative timeline for the next steps in identifying and securing new cemetery land in Sheffield. It outlines the key actions, expected timeframes, and lead responsibilities for progressing the programme. This timeline will be reviewed and updated in the next report to the Strategy and Resources Committee, scheduled for December 2025, to reflect progress and any changes in delivery priorities.

	Actions	When	Responsible	Involved
1	Initial site assessment and feasibility (ecological, Tier 1 groundwater risk assessments, tenancy)	Aug – Oct 2025	Bereavement Services	Property Services, Planning Services, Legal Services, Parks & Countryside (Ecology)
2	Review initial site assessments and establish site viability and priority (concurrently with action 1).	Aug – Nov 2025	Bereavement Services	Property Services, Planning Services, Legal Services, Parks & Countryside (Ecology)
3	Liaise with tenants and Legal Services on next steps for Council-owned land	Aug– Dec 2025	Property Services, Legal Services	Bereavement Services, Planning Services
4	Commission additional site feasibility work for priority sites (Tier 2 groundwater risk assessments, legal reviews)	Oct – Dec 2025 *	Bereavement Services	Property Services, Planning Services, Legal Services, Parks & Countryside (Ecology)
5	Update report to Strategy and Resources Committee	Dec 2025	Bereavement Services	Property Services, Planning Services, Legal Services, Parks & Countryside (Ecology)
6	Develop forward programme plan for prioritised sites (including initial business cases, designs, costings, engagement strategy)	Dec 2025 – Jan 2026	Bereavement Services / Programme Coordinator	Property Services, Planning Services, Legal Services, Capital Delivery Service

* The timeframes for conducting the additional site feasibility on prioritised sites may vary due to site conditions / level of data collected. As such, the monitoring period may need to be extended into 2026 to collect enough site data.

3 How does this decision contribute to the Council Plan?

3.1 Council Plan Outcomes

- 3.1.1 The decision to secure new burial provision supports key Council Plan outcomes, including sustainable development, social equity, environmental sustainability, and community wellbeing. It reflects the Council's commitment to inclusive infrastructure and meeting the diverse needs of Sheffield's population.
- 3.1.2 Access to dignified burial spaces supports emotional wellbeing and respects cultural practices, aligning with the Council's health and wellbeing priorities.
- 3.1.3 The proposal promotes social inclusion by ensuring equitable access to end-of-life services for all communities, regardless of background or faith.
- 3.1.4 Environmental sustainability is embedded in site selection and design, with consideration for ecological impact, green infrastructure, and biodiversity.
- 3.1.5 This decision supports responsive local services by anticipating future needs and proactively managing infrastructure.
- 3.1.6 The Council's response to the December 2024 petition demonstrates its commitment to listening to residents and acting on community concerns.

3.2 Alignment with the Sheffield Local Plan

- 3.2.1 The Citywide Cemetery Plan is closely aligned with the emerging Sheffield Local Plan, which sets out the spatial strategy for land use across the city over the next 15 years. Burial provision is a critical component of long-term infrastructure planning and must be considered alongside housing, transport and environmental priorities.
- 3.2.2 The identification of new cemetery sites supports the Local Plan's objectives for sustainable development, equitable access to services, and the protection of green space.
- 3.2.3 As the Local Plan progresses through its statutory stages, Bereavement Services will continue to engage with Planning colleagues to ensure that proposed sites are appropriately



designated, and that burial land requirements are reflected in future land allocations.

- 3.2.4 This alignment ensures that the Council's approach to bereavement services is integrated into wider urban planning and contributes to the delivery of inclusive, resilient neighbourhoods.

3.3 People – Prosperity – Planet

- 3.3.1 The provision of new burial space in Sheffield clearly reflects the Council's triple-lock policy of People, Prosperity, and Planet by:
- 3.3.2 Supporting people with equitable access to burial spaces that honour cultural diversity and promote social wellbeing.
- 3.3.3 Contributing to prosperity by retaining funerals in Sheffield which in turn supports local businesses such as stone masons and funeral directors, providing employment and ensuring long-term economic stability.
- 3.3.4 Aligning with planet by considering environmentally sustainable burial methods, careful land use and preserving green spaces.

3.4 City Goals

- 3.4.1 A Connected Sheffield: Ensuring burial services are accessible to all communities supports inclusivity and cultural respect.
- 3.4.2 A Green and Resilient Sheffield: Sustainable burial practices and thoughtful site selection contribute to biodiversity and environmental health.

4 What community or partner engagement has been undertaken and how has it informed the proposal?

- 4.1 Community and partner engagement has played a central role in shaping the Citywide Cemetery Plan and the proposals set out in this report. The Council Plan emphasises the importance of finding shared solutions to complex challenges, and this work has been developed in close collaboration with elected members, residents, and key stakeholders.
- 4.2 Engagement began with a successful citywide public consultation, conducted between January and March 2024 via the Councils Have Your Say platform. Nearly 3,000 responses were received from residents across all Sheffield postcodes and major faith groups. The consultation provided valuable insights into community needs and preferences, including strong



support for faith-specific provision, environmentally sustainable options, and improved cemetery facilities. These findings have directly informed the strategic plan and service design proposals.

- 4.3 Following the consultation, a cross-party elected member Task and Finish Group was convened. The group concluded its work in September 2024 and produced 80 strategic and operational recommendations to guide future service development. These recommendations are being reviewed for inclusion in the Council's Cremation, Burial and Cemetery Green Spaces Strategy, which will be presented to the Communities, Parks and Leisure Committee in September 2025.
- 4.4 Further engagement has taken place since the petition and debate at Full Council on 4 December 2024, which highlighted the urgency of the situation, particularly for Islamic burial provision. Initial discussions have taken place with key stakeholders, including the South Yorkshire Muslim Bereavement Trust, the Sheffield Muslim Bereavement Forum, and local funeral directors. Further engagement will take place as the programme progresses to ensure that future provision reflects the needs and expectations of Sheffield's diverse communities.
- 4.5 This engagement has ensured that the proposals are grounded in lived experience, community priorities, and cross-sector collaboration. It reflects the Council's commitment to inclusive service design and ongoing dialogue with residents and partners.

5 What alternative options did we consider?

5.1 **Alternative Option 1: Do nothing.**

This option would involve continuing with existing cemetery provision without identifying or developing new burial space. It has been rejected as it would mean Sheffield City Council would run out of burial space within 7.5 years, and within approximately 3 years for Muslim burials. The impact of running out of burial land would be far-reaching, affecting the emotional wellbeing of residents, placing pressure on funeral services, and creating significant challenges in urban planning, infrastructure, and community relations. This option is therefore not considered viable.

5.2 **Alternative Option 2: Rely on private sector provision.**

This option would involve encouraging private providers to deliver new cemetery space in Sheffield. It has been rejected because cemeteries are not typically commercially viable and do not generate sufficient income to attract private investment, except in specialist circumstances. There is currently only a small private cemetery offer in Sheffield, and identifying



suitable land would remain a challenge. Relying on private provision would also limit the Council's ability to ensure inclusive access for all communities, particularly those with specific religious or cultural requirements, and would reduce control over service standards, environmental sustainability, and long-term planning. This option is therefore not considered viable.

5.3 **Alternative Option 3: Deliver a scaled-back offer.**

This option would involve planning for a reduced level of provision. While it would require less land and lower upfront investment, it has been rejected as not cost-efficient in the long term. A scaled-back offer would limit opportunities to include commercial services such as funeral facilities, cafés, and memorial gardens, which are important for enhancing the service offer and generating income to support site management.

Crucially, this option does not reflect the feedback from nearly 3,000 residents during the citywide consultation, which showed strong support for improved facilities, faith-specific provision, and environmentally sustainable options. A scaled-back approach would undermine these priorities and risk delivering a service that does not meet the expectations of Sheffield's diverse communities.

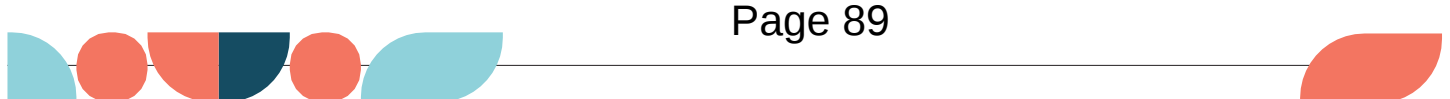
6 How has equality, diversity and inclusion been actively considered?

- 6.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion have been actively considered throughout the development of the Citywide Cemetery Plan. The plan has been shaped by detailed analysis of burial trends, population data, and community feedback, with particular attention given to the needs of people who share protected characteristics to ensure that future burial provision in Sheffield is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all communities.
- 6.2 The plan responds directly to the needs of Sheffield's diverse communities, including faith groups with specific burial requirements. For example, the inclusion of dedicated Muslim burial provision reflects both religious obligations and the strong feedback received during the public consultation, in which 87.6% of respondents identified as Muslim. Many expressed a clear preference for a separate cemetery or designated sections that meet Islamic burial rites. This feedback has been central to the design of the proposed service offer. The high proportion of Muslim respondents reflects the urgency of current burial space pressures within the community. As new cemetery sites are identified and developed, further consultation will be carried out with all faith groups as appropriate to ensure future provision continues to meet the needs of all communities across the city.

- 6.3 The plan also includes dedicated natural burial space, which aligns with the preferences of non-faith communities and those seeking environmentally sustainable options. This reflects consultation responses from non-Muslim residents, who prioritised environmental considerations and supported green burial practices.
- 6.4 Geographical equity has also been considered, with proposals for four to six new cemeteries distributed across the city. This approach ensures that all communities, regardless of location, have access to suitable burial provision. It also responds to feedback that location is a key factor in burial planning, particularly for non-Muslim respondents.
- 6.5 No negative impacts have been identified for any protected group. Where specific needs have been raised—such as religious burial requirements, environmental preferences, or accessibility concerns—these have been actively addressed through the design of the strategic plan and proposed infrastructure.
- 6.6 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed to support this proposal and will continue to inform future phases of work. As the programme progresses, further engagement will be undertaken with faith-based organisations, community groups, and residents to ensure that detailed design and delivery continue to reflect the diversity of Sheffield's population.

7 Financial and Commercial Implications

- 7.1 This report does not commit the Council to any immediate financial or commercial expenditure. However, by approving the recommendations, the Strategy and Resources Committee acknowledges that future proposals will require significant capital investment to deliver.
- 7.2 The provision of new cemetery space across Sheffield will require significant capital investment. While the exact cost will depend on the location, size, and scope of services delivered at each site, indicative estimates suggest that the cost per site could range from £1 million to £5 million.
- 7.3 These figures reflect the variability in land acquisition, infrastructure requirements, planning constraints (e.g. conservation areas), amendments to the highway infrastructure, and the inclusion of additional services such as funeral facilities, florists, cafés, and environmentally sustainable features.



- 7.4 At present, no dedicated funding has been allocated for the delivery of new cemeteries. Initial feasibility work is being funded through the Bereavement Services operational budget. As the programme progresses, future phases will require incorporation into the Council's capital programme.
- 7.5 Individual business cases will be developed for each proposed site once feasibility assessments are complete and preferred locations are identified. These business cases will outline the specific services to be delivered, site-specific constraints, and associated costs. For example, sites with complex ecological or groundwater conditions may require additional investment and regulatory compliance. Similarly, the inclusion of enhanced onsite services may offer greater income-generating potential but will also involve higher upfront capital costs.
- 7.6 The most likely funding route is through a borrowing model, with capital costs repaid over time via income generated from burial and related services. However, it is important to note that the volume of burials will not increase because of new cemetery provision, only the location of burial will change. Therefore, while income levels are expected to remain broadly stable, a greater proportion of this income will be required to service borrowing repayments. This will reduce net income and have implications for the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 7.7 Commercial opportunities, such as funeral service spaces, memorial gardens, cafés, and other ancillary services, will be explored to enhance the service offer and support financial sustainability. These elements will be considered as part of site-specific business cases and aligned with community needs and environmental priorities.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Committee should note that the Council does not have a statutory duty to provide new cemeteries. However, if the Council decides to provide new cemeteries, it will then undertake the statutory responsibilities associated with operating and managing them as set out below.
- 8.2 Sheffield City Council is designated as a burial authority under Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972. This legislation grants the Council the discretionary power to provide and maintain cemeteries, including those located outside its administrative area.
- 8.3 The Council does hold a statutory duty under Section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. This duty requires the Council to arrange for the burial or cremation of any person who dies within its district where no other suitable arrangements are being made, typically in cases where the deceased has no next of kin or where relatives are unwilling or

unable to act. This duty exists to protect public health and ensure dignified treatment of the deceased.

8.4 The Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 governs the management of cemeteries provided by local authorities. While it does not impose a duty to provide cemeteries, it does place statutory obligations on burial authorities that operate cemeteries. These include:

- Keeping cemeteries in good order and repair, including associated buildings and infrastructure.
- Maintaining accurate records of burials, grave locations, exclusive rights, and exhumations.
- Issuing deeds of exclusive rights and ensuring secure storage of all cemetery records

8.5 These legal provisions form the statutory framework within which the Council must operate. The Council must ensure that any cemeteries it does provide are managed in accordance with these statutory obligations.

9 Climate and Environmental Implications

9.1 The provision of new burial land in Sheffield can support the council's climate and environmental goals when planned strategically. Although burial land itself may not be a major source of emissions, its development offers opportunities to contribute to broader climate objectives.

9.2 The Strategy and Resources committee is responsible for embedding climate action across all council services. Burial land provision, especially when integrated with biodiversity improvements, tree planting, and nature-based solutions, aligns with this approach. It also fits within the council's longer-term planning framework, which is essential for climate adaptation and mitigation.

9.3 The council's city goals include creating a green and resilient Sheffield. Burial land, if designed with ecological sensitivity, can support this plan. The Council Plan also links climate action to health, prosperity, and environmental wellbeing. Burial provision contributes to these goals by respecting cultural needs, enabling low-impact land use, and building community trust.

9.4 The Communities, Parks and Leisure committee is expected to consider climate and biodiversity in all its decisions. Burial land planning offers a chance to integrate nature-based solutions such as flood mitigation and habitat creation, which are key priorities for this committee.



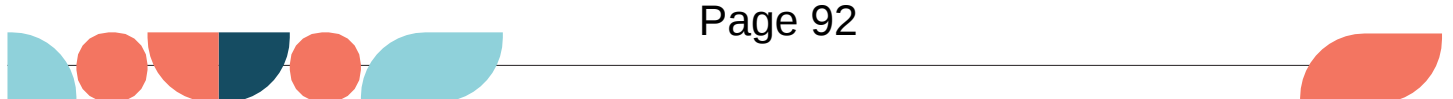
- 9.5 Overall, the development of new burial land supports climate adaptation, aligns with council-wide goals, and offers opportunities for biodiversity and sustainable land use, while also meeting the needs of diverse communities.

10 Other implications

- 10.1 There are no further implications arising from this report. Any operational or site-specific considerations will be addressed in future phases of the programme.

11 Reasons for decision

- 11.1 Sheffield is facing increasing pressure on burial space and without intervention, citywide burial provision will be exhausted in approximately 5 to 7.5 years, with existing Muslim burial space estimated to run out in approximately 3 years. To address this, the Strategy and Resources Committee is asked to support the strategic direction outlined in the report, which aims to deliver inclusive, sustainable, and community-responsive cemetery provision. This includes recognising the scale of investment required, noting progress made since March 2025, and confirming continued strategic oversight.



Sheffield's City-Wide Cemetery Plan



**Bereavement & Coronial Services
Sheffield City Council
August 2025**

Executive Summary

This document outlines a strategic, city-wide plan for future cemetery provision in Sheffield. It assesses current burial capacity, forecasts long-term demand, and integrates public consultation findings with national trends to shape a plan for inclusive, accessible, and sustainable services.

Sheffield's cemetery infrastructure is under growing pressure, with five sites closed to new burials and seven nearing capacities. Muslim burial provision is particularly urgent, with approximately three years of space remaining.

To meet burial needs over the next 50 to 100 years, the city requires a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hectares of new burial space, including a minimum of 4.5 and up to 9 hectares for Muslim burials. Public consultation highlighted strong preferences for faith-specific provision, environmentally sustainable options, and geographically distributed sites.

The plan proposes:

- Four to six new flagship cemeteries.
- Dedicated areas for faith-specific, traditional, natural, and ashes burials.
- Improved facilities to enhance visitor experience and site management.
- A separate Muslim cemetery or dedicated sections within other sites.
- A natural burial site focused on green practices.

Recognising that new sites may take up to three years to become operational, the plan includes interim actions to secure burial space by 2028, including urgent expansions at City Road and Stocksbridge Cemeteries. Priority will be given to areas with the most pressing need, particularly the Southeast and neighbourhoods with high Muslim populations.

If approved, this plan will form part of the draft Cremation and Cemetery Services Strategy, which sets out a long-term plan for delivering inclusive, sustainable and compassionate bereavement services across Sheffield. It provides a robust evidence base and strategic framework to guide future provision, ensuring all communities are served with dignity and foresight.

1 Background

The Bereavement and Coronial Service is currently responsible for 16 cemeteries across Sheffield, most of which date back to the 19th and 20th centuries. The most recent opened in Stocksbridge in 1950 and no further burial provision has been added since. These sixteen cemeteries amount to 268 acres of land in total.

Sheffield's cemeteries have an estimated 5 to 7.5 years of burial space remaining, with five sites already closed to new burials and seven nearing capacity. Provision for Muslim burials is particularly urgent, with only around three years of space left.

To meet long-term demand, the city requires a minimum of 12 and up to 24 hectares of land for new burial plots and access space, excluding infrastructure. This city-wide strategy proposes four to six flagship cemeteries with dedicated areas for faith-specific and environmentally sustainable burials, ensuring capacity for the next 50 to 100 years. For Muslim burials, a minimum of 4.5 and up to 9 hectares will be needed, with a preference for a separate autonomous cemetery or dedicated sections within other sites.

Expansion of existing provision is essential to meet immediate needs. Separately, a project at Stocksbridge Cemetery aims to develop unused land for over 750 additional grave spaces, addressing local demand outside the broader city-wide requirements.

New cemeteries may take up to three years to become operational; by then, only five Council cemeteries are expected to remain open for new burials. While Muslim burial space will be limited, planned expansion at City Road Cemetery is expected to prevent full exhaustion. Stocksbridge will remain open, subject to land development, and burial capacity will be reviewed every three months during this period.

Provision for Different Faiths:

The service is an inclusive provider and has provision to meet the demands of every community within the city, including religious groups that have specific burial requirements. For the people of the Jewish and Muslim faiths, burial is the only option, and the Council has allocated specific plots in certain cemeteries which are tailored to these religious needs.

Jewish Burial Provision:

At the 2021 Census, 649 Sheffield residents described themselves as Jewish, a 15.1% decrease from 747 in 2011.

Sheffield's Reform Jewish community is served by a dedicated section at Abbey Lane Cemetery, used exclusively for this faith group. The total number of Jewish burials in this section over the past two decades is in single figures. Whilst this provision remains in place, its longer-term viability is currently being considered, and future cemetery developments will include appropriate provision for the requirements of the Reform Jewish Community.

The Orthodox Jewish community is served by the private Ecclesfield Jewish Cemetery on Colley Road. Whilst it has been established that there is ample remaining provision in this cemetery to serve this community, the Bereavement and Coronial Service will continue to engage with members of the faith to understand any future needs and ensure the service remains responsive.

Muslim Burial Provision:

Currently, Muslim burials are available at City Road Cemetery and Shiregreen Cemetery. A dedicated section at Tinsley Park Cemetery previously accommodated Muslim burials, but it reached full capacity in 2021. Since its closure, demand has increased at both City Road and Shiregreen Cemeteries.

Based on the current data, burial space for the Muslim community is limited, with an estimated 3 years of capacity remaining.

Demand will certainly increase over the coming years due to the growing / ageing population of this community within the city. In 2021, the percentage of people who described themselves as Muslim in Sheffield was 10.3%, up from 7.7% in 2011, at an increase of 2.6%.

The total official figure is 57,044 but may be slightly higher due to increased birth rates and conversions. Based on these factors and the projected population increase for the Muslim community of 2.6% over 10 years, we predict the total population to be 60,000+ by 2034. Muslim burial space has subsequently been highlighted as a particularly urgent issue.

Roman Catholic Community:

The Roman Catholic Community has dedicated sections within most existing cemeteries. "Non-Faith" plots are also suitable for Roman Catholic burials and will be a viable alternative if the dedicated sections reach their capacity.

2 Current city-wide capacity

As an August 2025 analysis and an evidence-based update on burial activity and remaining capacity has shown:

- Burial capacity across Sheffield has decreased to an estimated 5 – 7.5 years, reflecting usage trends over the past 20 months.
- There are an estimated 2,205 – 3,164 new burial spaces remaining across all 16 cemeteries in total.
- Burial space is being depleted at expected rates.
- Muslim Burial rates were slightly higher than forecast, increasing pressure on the limited remaining capacity for this community, which is now estimated at 3 years.

This citywide assessment, grounded in detailed cemetery level analysis, community specific outlooks and robust burial data, has provided clear evidence to guide future burial provision across Sheffield and has directly informed the requirements outlined below for how long-term needs across all communities can be met.

3 Cemetery Overview – August 2025

Closed Cemeteries:

Five cemeteries no longer have any capacity to accommodate new burials:

- Beighton (closed for new burials in 2022)
- Burngreave (closed for new burials in 1980s)
- Darnall (closed for new burials in 1980s)
- Intake (closed for new burials in 2022)

- Norton (closed for new burials in 1980s)

Open with limited capacity:

7 of the 16 cemeteries can still accommodate new burials but are limited in terms of their remaining capacity:

- Abbey Lane (69-98 spaces remaining)
- Burncross (12-17 spaces remaining)
- City Road (99-141 spaces remaining)
- Ecclesfield (70-99 spaces remaining)
- Handsworth (27-39 spaces remaining)
- Stocksbridge (10-14 spaces remaining)
- Woodhouse (53-76 spaces remaining)

Burncross, Handsworth and Woodhouse are expected to reach capacity within the next 12 months. Whilst Stocksbridge currently has limited capacity, an additional 750 graves could be made available with the development of appropriate infrastructure. A small number of additional spaces for Muslim burials may also be created at City Road Cemetery through expansion into an undeveloped plot. 100 spaces have been made available Abbey Lane Cemetery and Ecclesfield has less than 100 remaining spaces.

Open Cemeteries:

The remaining 4 cemeteries are classified as open to new burials with sufficient capacity:

- Crookes (376-537 spaces remaining)
- Shiregreen (1248-1782 spaces remaining)
- Tinsley Park (211-301 spaces remaining)
- Wisewood (30-60 spaces remaining)

The combined estimated remaining capacity at Shiregreen and Crookes Cemeteries represents approximately 73% of the total burial space still available across the city. However, the plot at Shiregreen Cemetery that can currently accommodate Muslim burials has a maximum of 317 spaces remaining, with an annual demand of 95 burials per year (in Shiregreen Cemetery). This demand will increase if the Muslim section at City Road reaches full capacity.

Wisewood Cemetery has an estimated 30–60 remaining spaces suitable for woodland burials. Although the site has substantial unused land, persistently difficult conditions raise concerns about its future suitability for burials. As such, space estimates are being treated with caution.

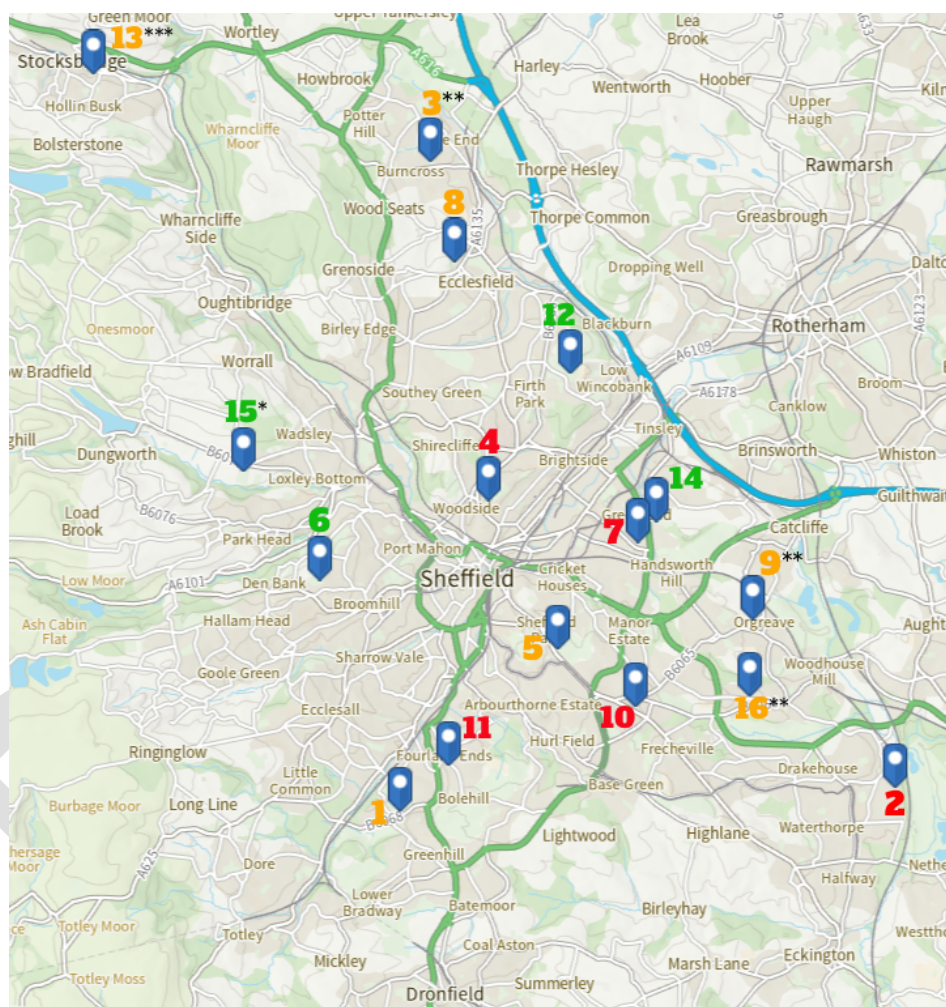
At-Risk Areas:

There is significant risk in the South and Southeast, with Beighton, Intake and Norton already closed to new burials, and City Road, Handsworth and Woodhouse expected to close to new burials within two years. Cemeteries in the north including Stocksbridge, Ecclesfield and Burncross, face considerable pressure due to limited space. Burngreave and Darnall remain closed to new burials as highlighted above.

Knock-on Effect of Cemetery Closures:

The closure of any cemetery has a direct impact on nearby sites, increasing demand and accelerating their capacity limits. For example, if Handsworth closes, residents may turn to Woodhouse, which would then reach capacity more quickly. This pattern also applies to faith-specific sections; if City Road closes, demand will shift to Shiregreen. These knock-on effects highlight the need to assess burial space availability across the city, rather than in isolation.

2025 Cemetery Sites Map



- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Abbey Lane | 5. City Road | 9. Handsworth** | 13. Stocksbridge*** |
| 2. Beighton | 6. Crookes | 10. Intake | 14. Tinsley Park |
| 3. Burncross** | 7. Darnall | 11. Norton | 15. Wisewood* |
| 4. Burngreave | 8. Ecclesfield | 12. Shiregreen | 16. Woodhouse** |

Open - Open with limited capacity - Closed for new burials.

* Although Wisewood cemetery is open, persistently challenging conditions make it difficult to accurately estimate remaining burial spaces. ** At the time of writing, Burncross, Handsworth and Woodhouse are expected to reach capacity within the next 12 months. *** Stocksbridge currently has limited capacity, but 750 graves could be made available with development of appropriate infrastructure.

4 Demand

Burial Activity and Projection Alignment:

Analysis conducted over the past 20 months has shown an annual average of approximately 404 burials with 213 non-faith burials, 156 Muslim burials and 35 Catholic burials. The non-faith burials were slightly below expectations, Catholic burials remained consistent however, Muslim burials exceeded anticipated levels. Further analysis was conducted over the last 6 years for Muslim burials which evidenced an average of 130 burials per annum. Additionally, 144 cremated remains burials were carried out in new plots, averaging around 86 per year. These figures confirm that the projected annual requirement of around 415 new grave burials remains broadly accurate and continues to provide a sound basis for planning future cemetery provision across the city.

Land Requirements

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) set the industry standard for grave space, estimating that a single body interment requires 24 square feet. While this equates to a theoretical maximum of 1,815 graves per acre, practical considerations such as layout, infrastructure, kerbing, and distancing reduce this to around 800 usable grave spaces per acre. This figure may be lower for burials where grave liners are required, usually for Muslim burials, where capacity can fall to 700–750 graves per acre.

Based on the annual demand of 415 new grave burials in Sheffield, the city requires slightly more than half an acre of land per year to meet current needs. When factoring in terrain, soil conditions and operational wastage, this analysis supports the long-term requirement of 12 to 24 hectares of land to service burial demand over the next 50 to 100 years.

Population Growth and Changes:

As of the latest Census on 21 March 2021, Sheffield had a population of 556,500 across 232,000 households; an increase of 0.7% since 2011. Assuming a steady growth rate of 1% per decade, the population is projected to reach approximately 584,320 by 2074. Based on the general “80:20 cremation to burial” ratio and the modest population growth expected over the next 50 years; future burial demand is unlikely to change significantly. However, this trend differs for the Islamic community, where population growth is estimated at 2.6% per decade. Given religious requirements for single interments per grave, demand for new burial plots within this community is expected to rise more sharply.

Year	Population (+ 2.6% every 10 years)	Demand for graves
2021	57044	130
2031	58527	133
2041	60049	137
2051	61610	140
2061	63212	144
2071	64855	148

(These figures should be treated with caution as the death rate is affected by several factors, and it would be unwise to predict growth at this rate beyond 50 years.)

Effect of Death Rates on Demand:

According to ONS statistics, since 2018, there have been an average of 5,644 deaths registered in Sheffield per year (9.7 per 1,000 of the population). However, annual death

rates can fluctuate, making it challenging to predict future demand for burial space with certainty.

For example, as shown in the table below, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a notable spike in death rates across the city, which in turn increased pressure on the Bereavement and Coronial service. This variability means that all future projections must be treated with caution, particularly when planning long-term burial provision.

Deaths Registered in Sheffield Since 2018:

Year	Death Rate (per 1,000 People)	Number of Deaths Registered
2018	9.1	5,280
2019	9.3	5,400
2020	10.5	6,100
2021	10.2	5,950
2022	9.8	5,700
2023	9.6	5,600
2024	9.4	5,480

National Trends:

Recent national data shows that cremation continues to be the preferred choice amongst the UK population, accounting for approximately 80% of all funerals. However, this figure has plateaued in recent years, suggesting that the long-standing upward trend in cremation rates is stabilising. This is reflected locally in Sheffield, where cremation rates have remained consistent over the past five years.

At the same time, there has been a noticeable shift towards environmentally sustainable burial practices. Nationally, around 1 in 10 burials are now considered environmentally sustainable, including woodland and natural burials. This trend is expected to grow as public awareness of environmental impact increases and as more local authorities and providers expand their green burial offerings.

The national landscape also highlights a growing interest in direct cremation and simplified funeral arrangements, driven by cost, personal preference, and changing cultural attitudes. While these trends may not significantly alter the overall demand for burial space in Sheffield, they do signal a need for flexibility and innovation in service design.

Implications for Future Provision:

These national trends reinforce the importance of offering diverse and adaptable burial options. While traditional burial remains essential (particularly for faith groups such as the Muslim, Catholic and Orthodox Jewish communities) the Council must continue to monitor national developments to ensure local provision remains responsive and inclusive. The service will remain responsive to national developments and committed to continuous improvement, ensuring that burial and cremation services consistently reflect the evolving needs of Sheffield's diverse communities, both now and in the years ahead.

5 Forward Plan

Evidence Base Guiding the Forward Plan:

The preceding analysis has established a robust evidence base to guide future burial provision across Sheffield. This section sets out the forward plan: what ideally should be delivered to ensure that every community in the city is served with sufficient burial provision for the next 50 to 100 years.

Plan for Future Cemetery Provision:

This section outlines the strategic plan for cemetery provision in Sheffield over the next 50 to 100 years. Informed by burial trends, capacity analysis, community needs and consultation feedback, it sets out an ideal model for inclusive, accessible and sustainable services. While this represents the preferred approach, practical constraints such as land availability, geography, budget and site-specific factors may require alternative delivery methods.

The plan:

- The Council proposes delivering 12 to 24 hectares of new burial land, including a minimum of 4.5 and up to 9 hectares dedicated to Islamic burial practices, alongside space for supporting infrastructure. This would leave between 7.5 and 15 hectares for non-Muslim burials; equivalent to 18.5 to 37 acres. Assuming an average of 800 burials per acre and an annual demand of 285 non-Muslim burials, this would provide burial capacity for 52 to 104 years.
- Four – six new cemeteries, evenly distributed across the city which all provide:
 - Dedicated areas within each cemetery for faith-specific burials, traditional burials, environmentally sustainable alternatives, and ashes interments
 - Facilities at each new cemetery tailored to the individual site to enhance customer experience, support high quality management and reduce anti-social behaviour, including, as an example, funeral facilities, café, toilets, and areas for reflection and memorialisation
 - The natural environment should be factored into every design
- A dedicated natural burial provision in a suitable location
- A dedicated Muslim cemetery within a suitable location

The Plan for Muslim Service Provision:

Muslim burials account for approximately one-third of all new grave burials in Sheffield. This community is both growing and ageing, and the use of lined graves means that more land is required per burial. Consultation feedback has also highlighted a strong preference for a separate, autonomous Muslim cemetery that can fulfil burial rites in accordance with Islamic law.

To meet the burial needs of Sheffield's Muslim community over the next 50 to 100 years, an estimated minimum of 4.5 and up to 9 hectares of land will be required. This estimate is based on a current annual demand of approximately 130 Muslim burials, which is expected to increase, and a cautious average of 700 burials per acre due to the use of grave liners. Delivering 4.5 hectares would equate to around 11.1 acres, providing space for approximately 7,784 burials: enough for roughly 60 years of capacity. If 9 hectares were delivered, this would equate to 22.2 acres and accommodate around 15,568 burials, offering approximately 120 years of provision.

Ideally, this provision would be delivered through a dedicated Muslim cemetery located within easy access of the areas of highest demand, including Burngreave, Darnall, Firth Park, Nether Edge, Sharrow, and the Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough constituencies. Provision at other cemeteries across the city would also be required to ensure accessibility for Muslim residents living in other areas.

Recognising the challenges of securing a large site in a densely developed part of the city, a flexible approach may be required. This would involve creating dedicated sections within other cemeteries to meet demand. The overall land requirement of a minimum of 4.5 and up to 9 hectares remains the guiding figure, with its distribution shaped by the location and suitability of future cemeteries.

The Plan for Stocksbridge:

Stocksbridge serves a distinct catchment area and therefore requires separate planning. A specific project will be scoped to develop unused land within Stocksbridge Cemetery, which could yield over 750 additional grave spaces. This land is not included in the citywide requirement of 12 to 24 hectares. Any development at Stocksbridge should also consider the inclusion of natural and woodland burial options to reflect local preferences.

Stocksbridge and Upper Don currently has a population of approximately 18,478, rounded to 20,000 for planning purposes. Based on Sheffield's average death rate of 9.7 per 1,000 people, this equates to roughly 200 deaths per year in the area. Applying the standard 80 to 20 cremation to burial ratio, this would suggest roughly 40 burials annually. However, recognising that Stocksbridge Cemetery currently averages only 5 burials per year, a more conservative planning estimate of 20 burials per year has been adopted.

Using the industry standard of 800 usable grave spaces per acre, provision for 50 years would require approximately 1.25 acres (0.51 hectares), and for 100 years, 2.5 acres (1.01 hectares). This range of 0.5 to 1 hectare represents a realistic and proportionate land requirement to serve the long-term burial needs of the Stocksbridge community, balancing projected demand with actual burial activity. There is undeveloped land within the Stocksbridge Cemetery boundary which could be used to meet this demand with the right investment.

6 Delivery

Given the scale of this programme of work, delivery is likely to be in a phased approach with priority guided by demand and forecast gaps in service provision over the next three years.

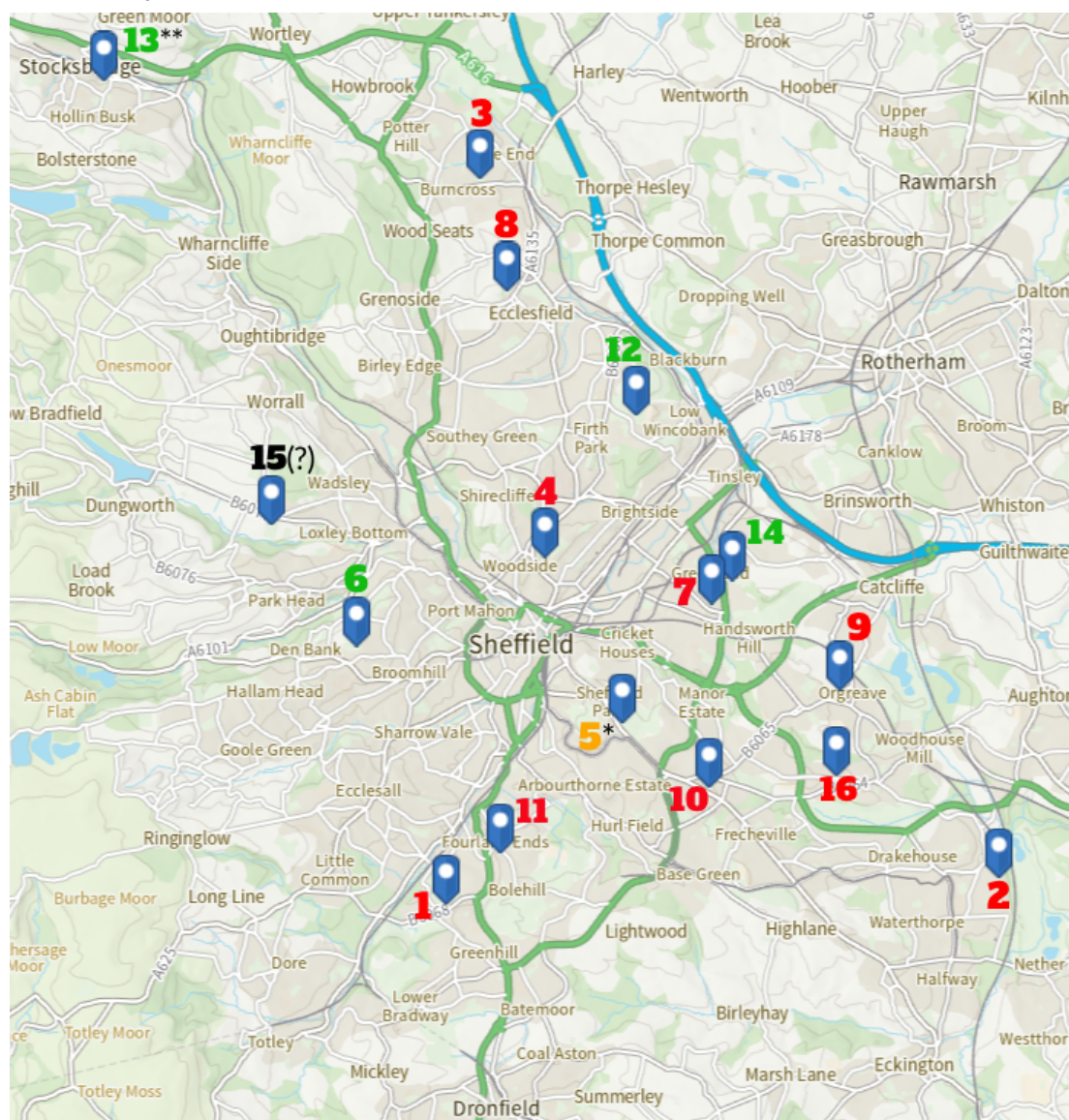
- **Priority:** Southeast along with areas of high Muslim populations
- **Followed by:** Southwest and North

Assumptions:

To guide planning priority and to ensure sufficient provision during this interim period, the following assumptions have been made:

- Burial provision will continue to be depleted at expected rates.
- Muslim burial provision will be exhausted within three years unless additional capacity is created. It is assumed that within three years, new space will have been added through one or more of the following options:
 - **Preferred Option:** Expansion into a newly developed area at City Road Cemetery. Early thinking indicates this could create an additional 60 to 80 graves, extending Muslim burial capacity by at least 6 to 12 months and taking overall capacity to between 2.5 and 4 years.
 - **Other option:** Use of plots at Shiregreen Cemetery that currently facilitate non-faith burials for Muslim interments. This will have a knock-on effect on provision for other communities and may be subject to technical constraints, such as the need for lined graves to be connected to a soakaway system. This remains a reserve option with the delivery of a new cemetery remaining the preferred option.
- Additional capacity will have been added at Stocksbridge Cemetery following the completion of the development project. This would ease pressure on the far north of the city.
- Five cemeteries will remain open to new burials, including Stocksbridge, where additional capacity will have been created following the completion of the development project. City Road will offer limited remaining spaces for the Muslim community, while the status of Wisewood remains uncertain due to variable ground conditions:
 - **Abbey Lane:** Limited remaining unless a groundwater solution is found.
 - **Beighton:** Already closed.
 - **Burncross:** Expected to have closed two years prior.
 - **Burngreave:** Already closed.
 - **City Road:** Expected to close, apart from a small number of Muslim spaces.
 - **Crookes:** Will remain open.
 - **Darnall:** Already closed.
 - **Ecclesfield:** Expected to be recently closed.
 - **Handsworth:** Expected to have closed two years prior.
 - **Intake:** Already closed.
 - **Norton:** Already closed.
 - **Shiregreen:** Will remain open, although the Muslim plot will be recently closed, assuming additional capacity has been created at City Road
 - **Stocksbridge:** Will remain open, based on the assumption that the development project has been completed.
 - **Tinsley Park:** Will remain open for Non-Faith and Catholic burials.
 - **Wisewood:** Status unknown. It is difficult to make a reliable assumption due to uncertainty around ground conditions and future suitability.
 - **Woodhouse:** Expected to have closed two years prior.

2028 Cemetery Sites Map Based on Three-Year Assumptions



Index

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Abbey Lane | 5. City Road* | 9. Handsworth | 13. Stocksbridge** |
| 2. Beighton | 6. Crookes | 10. Intake | 14. Tinsley Park |
| 3. Burncross | 7. Darnall | 11. Norton | 15. Wisewood(?) |
| 4. Burngreave | 8. Ecclesfield | 12. Shiregreen | 16. Woodhouse |

Open - Open with limited capacity - Closed for new burials.

* Expected to be recently closed, apart from a small number of Muslim spaces on plot R6

** Stocksbridge will remain open, based on the assumption that the development project has been completed

(?) Status unknown. It is difficult to make a reliable assumption due to uncertainty around ground conditions and future suitability.