



Penn Road Cemetery Consultation 2021

Opens: 17 November 2021

Closes: 1 December 2021

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Overview

What is the purpose of this consultation?

Buckinghamshire Council are preparing to open the new Penn Road Cemetery, Hazlemere. The new cemetery will operate as part of a combined cemetery facility (alongside High Wycombe Cemetery) for the High Wycombe town area providing burial space primarily (although not exclusively) for the unparished area of High Wycombe.

We are currently consulting key stakeholders and partners on the core arrangements for the new cemetery to help inform the services that we will provide.

How to provide feedback

You can get involved in the consultation by:

- Completing the survey below or online at <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/>

What happens next

The results of this survey will be used to help us finalise plans to deliver services at the new Penn Road Cemetery.

High Wycombe Town Committee will review arrangements for the cemetery and proposed fees and charges at their meeting in early 2022.

The opening of the new cemetery is currently planned from 1st April 2022.

Privacy

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this consultation. We will keep the information confidential and store it securely, in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions, please email us on dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk. or write to our Data Protection Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

Consultation Survey

About you

1. What is your name?

Wycombe Muslim Communication Forum (WMCF)

2. What is your email address?

contact@wycombemcf.org

3. What is your area/Ward?

Pan High Wycombe.

4. In what role are you responding to this consultation?

Please feel free to complete the survey more than once if you have several roles.

- ☒ Representative of a religious organisation
- ☒ Representative of a community group
- ☐ Resident
- ☒ Business operator
- ☐ Ward Councillor
- ☐ Parish / Town council
- ☒ Representative of a charity
- ☐ Other (please give details below)

The WMCF representative the Mosques, Muslim Faith/Religious leaders and Muslim funeral services in High Wycombe. The Following Mosques and Organisations are involved with WMCF
Wycombe Islamic Mission & Mosque Trust- Jubilee Road Mosque/Townfield Totteridge Road Mosque
Castlefield Mosque/ Micklefield Mosque / Jamia Rehmania Educational and Cultural Trust - Castlefield/
Karima Foundation - Castlefield Community Centre/ The Friday Club/ Imam Ali centre – Castlefield
/ Wycombe Islamic Society (WISE) / Muslim Education Centre and Welfare Trust – Totteridge

The proposal

Consecrated Ground

Consecrated ground is ground that has already been made or declared sacred or holy by the Church of England prior to use, and is therefore suitable for Church of England burials. The existing High Wycombe Cemetery has a large area of available burial space that has been consecrated by the Church of England which means that Church of England consecrated burials can continue on this site for many years to come.

The Council is not proposing to consecrate land at Penn Road cemetery at the moment, but subject to any future decision making by the Council and equalities impact assessment, the Council may carry out consecration at a future date, if and when required.

This approach means that we can be flexible about how we use the available cemetery space across the two sites and cater to a wide range of religious and cultural requirements.

5. Do you agree with this approach?

☒ Yes

☐ No

6. Please provide comments/evidence to support your views.

The WMCF is happy to hear that the PENN site is not consecrated as yet. The Muslim community would like to see its religious, cultural values and wishes facilitated in the new graveyard. The Muslim community would like to see a designated portion of the Penn Road site earmarked for the burial of people from the Islamic faith. Families of deceased members of the High Wycombe Muslim community exclusively bury their dead and have increasingly stopped sending their deceased relatives back to their country of origin and are burying their loved ones in High Wycombe. Many families have raised their concerns at the processes and procedures offered to them (or not offered to them, where the case may be) during the burial process, hence we would like to take this opportunity to address the requirements of the Muslim Communities from High Wycombe, in forging a new approach to facilitating Muslim Burial at the new site at Penn Road. The WMCF would like to see a dedicated portion of the new site exclusively for the Muslim community that serves fully its religious and cultural requirements.

Scattering of ashes

The Council is not proposing to provide a service for the scattering of cremated remains at Penn Road Cemetery.

However, the Cemetery will offer columbarium for long-term lease which are memorials for holding cremated remains (ashes). At the end of a lease period cremated remains which are not claimed by a family member or nominated person will be scattered in a small designated and signposted area of the cemetery in a woodland garden of remembrance.

This means that we can ensure that ashes that are not claimed at the end of a lease period can be suitably laid to rest.

7. Do you agree with this approach?

☒ Yes

☐ No

8. Please provide comments/evidence to support your views.

Families of deceased members of the High Wycombe Muslim community, exclusively bury their dead. They do not cremate.

Vault/chamber burials

At High Wycombe cemetery the Council currently offers burials in concrete chambers. Concrete chambers have been a good option for this cemetery because of the steep made up ground on the site.

At Penn Road cemetery, where the ground is level and flat, the Council would prefer to offer polypropylene vaults/chambers for families that would like their loved ones to be buried in a vault/chamber.

Polypropylene vaults are used by a large number of cemeteries across the country and cater for a range of religious and cultural beliefs. They take up less space in the cemetery, can be installed at the time of burial (rather than in advance) and are lighter which means they can be more easily installed with less labour required. They are extremely durable and can withstand pressures in excess of 3 tonnes so offer a strong solution to help avoid ground sinking and collapsing. They are also slightly cheaper than concrete vaults.

9. Do you agree with this approach?

☐ Yes

☒ No

10. Please provide comments/evidence to support your views.

Following consultations with all the Mosque leaders in High Wycombe, as well as discussions with faith leaders from different Muslim denominations, there is a unanimous consensus that they DO NOT wish to use the proposed polypropylene vaults.

At the new site the following consensus of options has been reached by the Muslim community faith leadership and of its institutions:

>Where possible organic materials be used to secure the sides of the grave if required by the geology. If the geology determines that a concrete vault is required to hold back the sides of the grave, then the community would accept upon the evidence provided. (No Vault option is being proposed by the council in a shrouded burial)

>There must be the possibility to bury without a coffin i.e. shrouded burial

>Where there is a shrouded burial a structure to protect the shrouded body should be hardwood or slate

>There must be the possibility to bury with a coffin, but the lid of the coffin could be removed once the coffin is lowered in the grave should the family request.

>If a concrete vault is to be used it should be 10/12 inc deeper inside the grave than currently designed in order for the top slabs, once placed are not easily accessible.

Shroud burials

A burial shroud is a cloth that's wrapped around the deceased person's body before burial. Shroud burials are customary in many religions, including in Christian, Muslim, and Orthodox Jewish faiths. As well as reflecting cultural and religious practices and beliefs, shrouds can be less damaging to the environment than traditional burials.

The Council proposes to offer shroud burials for those that would like them, either with or without a vault/chamber, dependent on requirements and health and safety implications. The location and design of the Penn Road cemetery site means that shroud burials can be offered in a part of the cemetery that is away from nearby housing and rights of way.

11. Do you agree with this approach?

☒ Yes

☐ No

12. Please provide comments/evidence to support your views.

The WMCF whole heartedly welcomes the possibility of burying the deceased in a shroud (without a coffin) with or without a vault.

In the case of without a vault, can the shrouded body be protected with hardwood or an alternative organic material.

The WMCF welcomes the no vault and vault option possibilities.

Can the proposed site where the shrouded burials are to be placed, be where there is an exclusive Muslim Burial portion, the WMCF is ready to purchase this portion for exclusive use for the Muslim community.

The exclusive Muslim Portion of the graveyard should be able to accommodate both vault and no vault options.

Burial plots for cremated remains (ashes)

Penn Road Cemetery will offer columbarium for long-term lease which are memorials for holding cremated remains (ashes).

At High Wycombe cemetery the Council currently offers burial plots for ashes and has a large area of available burial space for ashes.

The Council is not proposing to offer specific burial plots for ashes at Penn Road Cemetery at the moment but will look to provide them at a future date when and if required.

13. Do you agree with this approach?

☒ Yes

☐ No

14. Please provide comments/evidence to support your views.

N/A

Families of deceased members of the High Wycombe Muslim community exclusively bury their dead. They do not cremate.

Additional comments

15. Please provide any other comments/suggestions you may have about the arrangements at Penn Road Cemetery.

1. WMCF would like to request a 7 day burial option to be allowed for the Muslim community of High Wycombe. This is very important to Muslims, as according to Islamic law, the body should be buried as soon as possible from the time of death, which means that funeral planning and preparations begin immediately.
2. The current procedure to book a grave requires that the coroner should be contacted before 12pm. However, in some cases it is not possible due to various situations, such as obtaining the death certificate and making other arrangements. We therefore, request that this time to be extended to 2pm.
3. In the design of the new graveyard adequate space be left between graves as not to step on others during burial, currently deep offence is being committed by accident due to limited space between the graves
4. Direction - graves aligned towards Mecca, scientifically verified
5. An open shelter to be erected at Penn Rd to cater for an outside funeral service near burial site
6. Adequate Parking as large numbers of people attend Muslim funerals

Thank you for completing the consultation survey.