

DIGNITY OPERATIONAL BURIAL SPACE PLAN

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**1.0 Introduction**

In February 2024 we were asked to provide The Council with an operational plan, the scope of this document we do not believe has been defined in the contract and so what is presented here is our

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understanding of the requirements. It would be useful to agree with The Council formally the scope of this document going forward and agreed submission dates.

Notwithstanding the point above this document aims to provide a current and up to date overview of the burial land currently available in the cemeteries and is supplementary to the 35-Year Strategic Plan. By the nature of its operational format, it will change from submission to submission. We would suggest we agree with The Council some timelines for refreshing the 35-year Strategic Plan, maybe every 3 years?

This document provides an overview of the areas available for full adult burial and interment of cremated remains (ashes) within the specified sites while also considering religious requirements. The figures presented within the document take into consideration space required for infrastructure e.g., pathways and access points and can only ever be treated as estimates until the land is formally prepared.

By the same token any references to current plots available and capacity utilisation can only ever be a forecast, as we do not know exactly what the death rate will be nor if plots have been pre bought or not. As a result, all current statuses are an estimate and we have based this on the following methodology: 1) Current available unused plots, 2) Utilisation of the plots over the last 12mths (i.e. new deaths no plot) based on this data we have projected forward the available space by plot type. Further work over the next 6 months we will add the position of the pre-purchased plots to this operational plan, as no true reflection of operational capacity can be done without this.

The RAG rating for a cemetery is dictated by The Council's methodology and the definition is below, within the report we have outlined what the unmitigated rating is and what the mitigated rating is post the proposed plan, where there are no plans, the rating will remain unmitigated. It is our view that where there are proposals to mitigate then the rating of the site should be reflective of the mitigated status so long as the time remaining is sufficient to execute on the proposed plan.

The document breaks down the current capacity and highlights potential development within the existing boundaries of the 5 currently open cemeteries. A colour will be applied to each cemetery to give a RAG rating to provide a visual reference.

Less than 5 operational years remaining – RED

5 – 10 operational years remaining – AMBER

10+ operational years remaining – GREEN

See appendix one for the latest interment rates.

## 1.1 Scope of Document

### Open Cemeteries

- East Herringthorpe Cemetery
  - Muslim Section
  - Areas for Other Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Burials/Interments for Cremated Remains
- Maltby Cemetery
- Haugh Road Cemetery
- Wath Cemetery

### Closed Cemeteries

- Greasbrough Town
- Greasbrough Town Lane Cemetery
- Masborough Cemetery
- High Street Cemetery
- Moorgate Cemetery

## 1.2 Economics, timings and costings

Under almost all scenarios outlined there is a path to mitigate the red status with a route to green, however if mitigations were put in place to get to green in all the sites, then total costs would likely be in the region of £1.6-2million. This is before any additional capex spend in relation to redevelopment of the cafe site and other works per the schedule of fines. As discussed already with The Council, Dignity is no longer making money on this contract and while prepared to commit the capital as required, we would need to be reassured and confident that key elements of the contract could be renegotiated to allow us to make a profit and achieve an ROI on the investments required. If there is not a path to this then Dignity would have no option but to look to invoke a termination of the contract based on the minimum ROI provisions. This is not a situation we wish to find ourselves in and as a result urgently request a meeting with The Council to discuss the contents of this paper and an agreement to a plan to find a resolution to the various issues raised. We believe, based on the timings below, that we can work to resolve and agree a go forward plan by December 2024 then all red statuses can be resolved before they become acute.

## 2.0 East Herringthorpe Cemetery

### 2.1 Muslim Burial Section

The Muslim Burial section in East Herringthorpe has been RAG rated Red, however we believe on a mitigated basis this moves to amber / green. For clarity Muslim burials are only ever 1 person per plot and given the community demand, we don't allow pre-purchase for this section as it would take all our plots. The figures below give an approximate number of operational years left, based on average rates, for the current number of lined graves and earthen graves available within the current section.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years	RAG Rating
Lined Graves	69	69/26=2.6	2 years 7 months	RED
Earthen Graves	30	30/11=2.7	2 years 8 months	RED

*Figures are approximate, operationally there are certain plots that we've previously excluded that we hold back for bad weather burials where we can't access the next in line going forward, we will include all available plots even though a family might not have a choice of all plots at any time.*

### Available Undeveloped Operational Land – Muslim Burials

As The Council is aware there are several options in relation to this site and we have sought as best as possible to outline the various options. All these solutions mitigate the current red status, and we look forward to discussing with The Council the preferred option, given the complexities as outlined of all scenarios below.

#### Option 1 – If planning permission is not granted and infilling the access to that site

This was the proposal made to the Muslim community and The Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2024, as an alternative to Option 2 below, given the ongoing planning issues. This solution seems to have caused some concern within the community, and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with a small group of stakeholders to explain the complexities around each option. While also to explaining Dignity's contractual responsibilities in the matter vis-a-vis The Council so that we can aim to find a solution that is agreeable to all. If we proceed with option 1, we can mitigate the current red status to that of amber, giving The Council, Community and Dignity time to resolve the longer-term requirements. We expect the costs of the lined graves to be £1000 each so in the region of £75-80k, in addition our current estimate is that work to install paths would cost in the region of £50,000 and take three months to complete, with no planning requirements. Total cost to create the space in the region of £125,000-£130,000, this makes the cost per grave approximately £1200 each. As a reminder we currently charge £2,496 for earthen graves and £3,524 for lined graves, including the interment charge.

Fig1 is a photo of the land, Fig2 is the map



	Number of Additional Plots Available
Lined Graves	78
Earthen Graves	34

#### Option 1 mitigated position

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Lined Graves	69+78 = 147	147/26 = 5.6	5 years 7 months	AMBER
Earthen Graves	30 +34 = 64	64/11 = 5.8	5 years 9 months	AMBER

#### Option 1b - Construction of access road and infill around road

Reviewing the plans for option 2 we believe that we can reposition the road, allowing the construction of a 2m wide access road to the proposed extension area, plus 1.5m either side for gabion wall and boundary. We are confident that this would increase the number of Earthen Graves, by creating an extra 4 rows, however at this stage we do not think we can increase the space for lined graves, albeit we are continuing to pursue all options. We think this would cost in the region of £150,000 to install the road network and subject to conversations with The Council the aim to procure three quotes in the next 4 weeks. This road would only be built if we proceed with option 2 as otherwise the access is not required, therefore we can create the additional 18 graves without building the road, and hence option 1b provides an interim solution while we work through the other considerations. The cost for the road does not include the costs for the graves or path networks, and so total costs are likely to be in the region of £250,000. However, the road costs of around £150,000 would save costs for option 2 if the planning issues can be resolved, otherwise we would be looking to procure an additional 18 graves at a cost of around £14k each, clearly not viable as we currently charge £3,524 for lined graves, so we would only pursue this option if the road were future proofing the site. We estimate that once planning was received the road could be built within 6mths and that this timescale is essentially included in the timescales for option 2 below.



Fig 3 – is a diagram of where we think we can construct the access road

Option 1b - Construction of access road and infill around road- mitigated plan

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Lined Graves	69	69/26=2.6	2 years 7 months	RED
Earthen Graves	30 + 18 minimum = 48	48/11= 4.3	4 years 3 months	RED

Option 2a – development of extension where planning permission submitted.



Fig 4

As The Council is aware, a plot of land was offered for burial space, however this has been subject to issues with regards to the development of this site, if the issues related to planning on this site can be resolved then we believe this future proof's the site for a long time. It is our estimate that the site would generate around 600-650 plots, with an estimated split of 70/30 lined to earthen graves based on community demand.

	Number of Plots Available
Lined Graves	445
Earthen Graves	190

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Lined Graves	69+445 = 514	514/26 = 19.7	19 years 8 months	GREEN



Earthen Graves	30 +190= 220	220/11 =20	20 years	GREEN
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If we re-commence the original plan to develop the site agreed for extension, we would need approximately 10-12 months to carry out further bore holes and water testing through winter and spring with an aim of finding a solution to satisfy the Environment Agency objections. We would like to discuss with The Council if there is a way they can assist in helping us to resolve the objections of pre-development conditions to allow the application to be progressed with the LPA. Or if The Council are prepared to lift the requirement and proceed with the application to planning committee. Once the planning application is approved, we anticipate an approx. 4 months build period. The project would be set up and tendered alongside the planning application process for works to commence 4 weeks after planning permission granted, based on the need to resolve the Environmental issues as outlined we expect this site to take 18-24mths to complete once a decision to pursue has been made.

We expect the costs of this work to be in the region of £750,000 (inc. VAT) + £450,000 for the lined graves, so around £1,200,000, which equates to a costs per grave of around £1900. As The Council is aware the contract with Dignity at the moment is loss making, and so while we are willing and can fund a £1.2million investment we would only want to do so if we had reached some conclusion with The Council in relation to the economics of the contract and a path back to profitability.

### Option 2b – development of extension and rely on the pre-existing planning permission for the entire demise.

There is an option to ignore the new planning permission and instead fall back on the original planning permission which covers the entire demise of the cemetery. However, for Dignity to proceed on this basis we would need to be confident that we had the support of The Council for this plan, we would need The Council to confirm that the existing consent permits development of the road extension development and hard surfacing without the need for planning permission. If we can secure this then we can reduce the elapsed time to have the site operational by around 12mths.

Dignity consultant surveyors would require up to 12 weeks to establish the appropriate drainage solution for the site, and an agreed final design would be needed if the road location is to be changed to accommodate additional space for Muslim section (option 1.b), we would need around 4 weeks to prepare tender documents and 4–6-weeks for the tender period. This would then need 8 weeks to sign of final pricing and for the contractor to arrange programme, with four-six months build period to completion. As a result, we think this site could be operational within 12months, if we can reach an agreement regarding planning. While timings would change this option would largely cost the same as option 2.a, i.e. around £1.2million.

### Option 3 – development of extension where planning permission submitted.

Dismiss the original area highlighted in Options 2 and to investigate the alternative areas i.e. Valley View which has been suggested as a possible alternative site by The Council in verbal conversation – this area is included within the red line boundary for extensions. We would need around three months to undertake topography and site investigations and ground condition testing to establish if sites can be accessed and any drainage issues resolved. Assuming that can be resolved then the build, tender timescales would be in the region of 9-12mths depending on size of site and amount of road surfacing required. We have no sense of costs at this stage.

## 2.2 Other Religious Denominations and Non-Religious Burials/Interments for Cremated Remains

The site has just gone into red in relation to non-Muslim graves, with around 4 – 41/2 years left based on the existing developed land.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating

<b>Burial Plots</b>	113	113/26=4.3	4 years 3 months	<b>RED</b>
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Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.

The Council has proved aerial photography and calculation on square meterage for additional space which if developed would create the space required to return the site to green, this is space on the Eastern side of the cemetery near to the private gardens. Based on the development of this then there is no concerns with space for non-Muslim burials. We will revert to The Council ahead of the next submission of this document (i.e. within 6mths) with timings and costing to get this work done such that The Council can formally approved the plan

	<b>Number of Plots Available</b>
<b>Burial Plots</b>	382

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.

Following development of this land the post mitigated space would be green at around 19 years.

	<b>Number of Plots Available</b>	<b>Operational Years Available</b>	<b>Years &amp; Months</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>
<b>Burial Plots</b>	113+382= 495	495/26=19.03	19 years	<b>GREEN</b>

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.

## 2.2 Conclusions and next steps - East Herringthorpe

We have several options in relation to East Herringthorpe cemetery:

- Option 1a – provides space for 2.7 years for lined and 4.3 for urban graves and give sufficient time to find an alternative solution that will not have planning issues, however option 1a would make option 2 very difficult due to lack of access and so a decision should not be made on this without a fuller conversation on the alternative options.
- Option 1b – provides a temporary provision of additional space while option 2 is being developed and can be operational to accept new graves more or less immediately once the proposed revised road route is marked out. At an approximate cost of £125-130,000, due to the cost per grave this would not be a viable option if option 2 was not the longer-term plan.
- Option 2a – provides a long-term solution but requires a decision soon to ensure can be delivered in time for the need, albeit 1b would be an interim bridge on capacity. This option is cost prohibitive to Dignity without clarity on the wider contract economics.
- Option 2b – as per option 2a but reduces the time, so provides more time to consider all options fully.
- Option 3 – if this was the preferred route then would recommend pursuing option 1a at the same time.

- 2 The Council is required to provide space for Dignity to use for plots, with Dignity being contractually obliged to develop the land to make operational and manage operationally, seeking relevant planning and carrying out sufficient grounds testing for suitability. As outlined above while there are options, some are currently not viable for planning or cost reasons and so we believe that the immediate next step is a conversation with the council and stakeholders to discuss the issues and agree a plan going forward.

## 3 Maltby Cemetery

### 3.1 Operational Land Currently Available

There are approximately 95 spaces left, in this cemetery there have been graves lost in the past due to collapse, rock seams and machinery access issues (required due to nature of ground) between existing graves, making it very difficult to give exact numbers, so the operational years identified that are available, could be a lot lower.

The table below shows, based on average burial rates, and percentage use, the approximate number of operational years available.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	71	3.8	3 Years 8 Months	Red

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand. Due to poor ground conditions identified, the only way to understand fully the number of operational years remaining will be at the point of excavation.

For Maltby cemetery there is no adjacent land which can be brought into use to extend the existing cemetery. The Council are required to provide land to extend or create new cemetery provision with Dignity being contractually obliged to develop the land to make operational and manage operationally.

A meeting has taken place in August 2024, The Council and Dignity representatives visited a site which is close to the current cemetery. A formal proposal has not been received by Dignity in respect of taking this forward. We await an updated formal proposal from the Council.

#### 4.0 Wath Cemetery

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.

Recent test investigation work (August 2024) has identified addition burial space on Section L giving a current availability of 40, this has increased since July because of a review of the site and undertaking several test digs across the cemetery, this identified an additional 25 sites.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	40	40/12=3.3	3 years 3months	RED

#### Option 1 – Cemetery re-planting

A review of the planting scheme by Glendale identified with a hedgerow movement and re-planting scheme, this would give new ground for burial, with the re-instatement of the removed hedgerows in areas which were unsuitable for burials. This proposal was rejected by The Council at the time and reinforced in June this year, therefore hasn't been progressed further.

	Number of Plots Available
Burial Plots	75

#### Option 1 summary

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	40+75=115	115/12=9.5	9 years 6 months	AMBER

#### Option 2 – Full Campsall Field Road Expansion (Planning Permission Approved)

There is an option (fig 5) for a new development at Campsall Field, this is a large development, and the projected total build times once decided to start are approximately 9-12mths (from start to finish). We are ready to proceed with this work and plan to get 3 quotes for the build work. We expect that the costs associated with this development will be in the region of £400-500k, around £1,000 per plot.





Fig 5

Based on the current plans for the expansion, this land could provide a total of 487 plots, however the split for cremated remains, full burials and any baby sections can be discussed and updated accordingly. As a result, this would mitigate the issues in the cemetery.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	40+487=527	527/12=43.9	43 years 10 months	GREEN

The plan can also be phased if required, as below in fig 6.

#### Option 2b – Partial Wath Extension



Fig 6

#### Option 2b Partial Extension summary

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	40+50=90	90/12=7.5	7 years and 5 months	AMBER

#### Option 2c Partial Extension relocating meadow area (in red) summary

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	40+78=118	118/12=9.8	9 years and 6 months	AMBER

#### Combined Option 1 + Option 2c

If we carried out the cemetery re-planting plan and the partial extension, this would enable the RAG rating to be green. At this stage this would be our recommendation, and we request a discussion with The Council to agree next steps.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
	Current 40 + Partial extension 78 + Hedgerow 75			
<b>Burial Plots</b>	=193	193/12=16	16 years	<b>GREEN</b>

### 5.0 Haugh Road Cemetery

Haugh Road Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan

Haugh Road Cemetery only has the top part of the Cemetery available for new burials, however there are a higher rate of re-opens within this cemetery with equates to 75% of the cemetery operational use.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
<b>Burial Plots</b>	72	34.1	34 Years 1 Months	<b>Green</b>
<b>Cremated Remains Plots</b>	61	22.9	22 Years 11 Months	<b>Green</b>

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.

These spaces are located within the newer burial section at the top of the cemetery:



Fig 7

### Available Undeveloped Operational Land

The Council had identified additional land on the bottom left corner of the site, further investigations with the Glendale Cemetery Wardens will take place in September 2024. For Haugh Road Cemetery there is no immediate concern for space, however Dignity and The Council will work to find additional land.

### 6.0 Greasbrough Lane Cemetery

Greasbrough Lane Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan. Greasbrough Lane Cemetery is one of the newest Cemeteries, there is approximately 90+ operational years within this site, and there is no concern for operational years available. The below table shows approximately what the space looks like within this site with established spaces in sections.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
<b>Burial Plots</b>	129	6.3	6 Years 3 Months	<b>Amber</b>
<b>Cremated Remains Plots</b>	32	2.2	2 Years 3 Months	<b>Green</b>

Below shows roughly the spaces gained on non-established sections:

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating

<b>Burial Plots</b>	1456 (Approx)	70.5	70 Years & 5 Months	<b>Green</b>
<b>Cremated Remains Plots</b>	500 (Approx)	54.7	54 Years & 7 Months	<b>Green</b>

The split above is very approximate and could change based on demand.

### 7.0 Greasbrough Town Lane Cemetery

Greasbrough Town Lane Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan, this site is currently a closed Cemetery for new burials, however there are still re-opens within this site.

#### Available Undeveloped Operational Land

An assessment of this site and the surrounding areas has identified there are small pockets of land surrounding the Cemetery that could be used for additional burial space, for both full burials and cremated remains. Consultation exercises will take place before anything is agreed, and to also look at the feasibility and appetite for any new burials and cremated remains based on the community response. If this land was utilised the site could reopen for new burials and could provide a substantial number of operational years. No work has been undertaken on this.

	<b>Number of Plots Available</b>	<b>Operational Years Available</b>	<b>Years &amp; Months</b>	<b>RAG Rating</b>
<b>Burial Plots</b>	101	181.8	181 Years 10 Months	<b>Green</b>
<b>Cremated Remains Plots</b>	50	50.0	50 Years	<b>Green</b>

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand



Fig 8

If the land identified is confirmed as suitable, this will give the site additional operational years. Discussions with The Council will take place to determine the feasibility and suitability, and we await further guidance as to the priority and demand.

### 8.0 Masbrough Cemetery

Masbrough Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan, it is currently a closed Cemetery for new burials.

#### Available Undeveloped Operational Land

There is a small strip located in the Cemetery that could be used for approximately 14 Cremated Remains plots, however there are large trees located within this area, therefore tree roots would also need to be considered. If the land identified is confirmed as suitable, this will give the site additional operational years. Work to establish the suitability of the land will take place between September and December 2024.

	Number of Plots Available	Operational Years Available	Years & Months	RAG Rating
Burial Plots	0	0.0		Red
Cremated Remains Plots	14	31.5	31 Years 6 Months	Green

Figures are approximate and could change based on demand.



Fig 9

### 9.0 High Street Cemetery

High Street Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan, it is a closed Cemetery, meaning there is no room for re-opens or new burials. This site has historical significance, which Dignity, The Council and the local communities are proud in working together to manage and preserve. There are plans to turn this into a site full of educational value for schools and communities given the bio-diversity and ecological developments identified.

### 10.0 Moorgate Cemetery

Moorgate Cemetery has been RAG rated Green within the 35-Year Strategic Plan, this site is a closed Cemetery; however, this site is still available for re-opens. Moorgate Cemetery holds a lot of historical importance, work with the community has achieved the re-establishment of access to graves enabling families and historians to observe and pay respect.

## APPENDIX 1

Numbers of interments in new plots taken place within the latest 12-month period, used for calculating the latest RAG ratings, as this provides the most accurate prediction of plot usage. Over the next 6 months we'll expand the operational plan to include the pre-purchase position so the most accurate operational plan can be shared.

These figures are the last 12 months, so have not been used in any prior reports, which will mean the rates in this report will be different to previous reports. In previous reports we have used total interments, but given the pre-purchase and re-open factors, we've used interments in new plots to be more accurate.

### East Herringthorpe August 2023 to August 2024

PP Cremated Remains	3
PP Burials	5
<b>New Burials</b>	<b>26</b>
New Cremated Remains	12
Re-open Burials	28
Re-open Cremated Remains	37
Full Term	8
NVF	3

### East Herringthorpe Muslim Burials August 2023 to August 2024

Lined	26
Earthen	11
Full term	7
NVF	28

### Wath August 2023 to August 2024

PP Cremated Remains	1
PP Burials	0
<b>New Burials</b>	<b>12</b>
New Cremated Remains	6
Re-open Burials	17
Re-open Cremated Remains	14
Full Term	0
NVF	0