

**EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
CEMETERIES STRATEGY  
Annexe 1  
PROVISION OF CREMATION**

**19 October 2012**

**Introduction**

The remit of the Cemeteries Strategy and this Equalities Impact Assessment is concerned with the Cemeteries service. The Strategy also highlights that while the Council provides provision for burial, for commemoration and the associated green spaces, the Cemeteries service does not itself provide for cremation which is the choice of approximately three-quarters of Brent residents. Whilst that is outside of the remit of the Cemeteries Strategy it is a potential equalities issue and as such is considered in an Appendix to this Equalities Impact Assessment.

**Detail**

The extent to which the aims of the Cemeteries Strategy, and the practice, are consistent with the Council's Comprehensive Equality Policy are analysed in this Equality Impact Assessment. The vision and objectives for Brent Cemeteries in meeting the needs of bereaved people are consistent with the Council's Comprehensive Equality Policy albeit cemeteries predominantly provide for burials whereas the majority of Brent residents opt for cremation and for some faiths cremation is a requirement.

In addition to the majority of Christians who opt for cremation (for reasons of preference, practicality or economy), cremation is generally required by Hindus and Sikhs, and permitted for Buddhists and Liberal Jews. Locally Hindus may use burial in the case of children. Others who may not be provided for within Brent are Zoroastrians.

This is a significant caveat. Approximately three-quarters (75%) of Brent residents seek either cremation (which is not provided by Brent nor otherwise provided within the London Borough of Brent area) or other interment provision beyond the Borough boundary. Though not part of the remit of the Cemeteries Strategy, the reasons why burial is provided but not cremation needs to be identified and consideration given to whether this is an equalities issue. The historic and geographic reasons for this situation are explained in this Appendix.

Provision of space for burial and interment in Brent dates from a time when the Brent area was largely rural; the population only a small percentage of the current population; and predominately Christian. Burial was the usual form of interment. The Brent area had numerous churches, most of which had churchyards; and burial space was not an issue except that over a period of centuries, over-burials were frequent. As the population of London increased and the urban area increased, the Brent area was suitably located to take

large numbers of burials from London, and for example the large, private Paddington Cemetery was constructed within what is now Brent. Just south of the southern border of Brent, a private cemetery had also been constructed at Kensal Green. As Brent itself became urban, local authority cemeteries were opened at Willesden, and at Alperton, and two Jewish cemeteries also at Willesden. A small Catholic cemetery was established in 1899 at (now) Waverley Avenue. The churchyard at St. Andrew's Church, Kingsbury was extended to the north. Whilst the population of Brent reduced for a few decades in the mid-late 20th century, the land allocated for cemeteries continued to fill, and there was decreasing land available for new cemeteries. In the 1970s, Brent established a local authority cemetery at Carpenders Park in the Borough of Harrow. Brent Cemetery Service has also taken on the management of two Church of England churchyards, at St. John's, Wembley and St. Mary's, Willesden, as required by legislation, but these being practically full make no significant contribution to current burial provision. Projections for the amount of burial space available within Brent under different scenarios are provided in the main Cemeteries Strategy.

Some of the potential demand for burials eased from the 1930s onwards, as cremation became accepted, at least for Anglian Christians, and this trend accelerated after the Second World War. Catholics were able to opt for cremation from 1963 following a Papal edit. Cremation is the choice following approximately 73% of deaths nationally, 86% in London; and 75% in Brent. The burial figures for Brent are thus proportionally higher than the average for Greater London for which burials represent an average of only 14% of all funerals. Brent does not have a crematorium, and a suitable space for one would be problematic within Brent.

The equalities issue is whether provision is addressed; as otherwise there could be an issue if Brent is not providing for three-quarters of its population. There is evidence that suggests that there is adequate provision for cremation within the north-west area of London. Table 1 indicates the provision of the nearest seven crematoria (and some other interment provision) to Brent. The rounded distances are taken as the shortest road distances between the nearest, and most distant addresses in Brent. (This analysis is used since the Borough itself is approximately 4-5 miles in diameter). Distances to crematoria range from 0 to 13 miles, with Kensal Green crematoria located on the other side of the Harrow Road boundary of Brent, while Breakspear Crematoria is about 13 miles from the most distant address in Brent. Crematoria are located in various directions around Brent; and there is no evidence that any area of the Borough is relatively disadvantaged as a result.

Crematoria are provided by the private and public sectors; and users have some choice, depending upon their faith or wishes, of providers, locations, and market rates. For those who opt for a religious, faith or memorial service, the cost of the cremation will be part of the overall package.

Though cremation was used for the large majority of interments of Brent residents during 2011, no evidence was presented as part of the Strategy of a shortage of crematoria within Brent or the surrounding parts of London, or of

future capacity constraints. The current constraints on burial location; and on future capacity, though affecting the remaining quarter of the population, present a more acute limitation.

Brent Council is not legally obliged to provide new burial spaces (but as a burial authority by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972 Brent is legally obliged to maintain its existing cemeteries 'in good order and repair'). Nor is there a legal requirement for the Council to provide crematoria. Crematoria and other forms of interment are however provided by some other local authorities, by some religious faiths and by the private sector (see Table 1).

That is not to rule out the possibility of crematoria being located in the Borough in the future. Though beyond the remit of the Cemeteries Strategy, the following could be considerations:

- The balance of demand over supply given the existing provision of seven crematoria within 0 to 13 miles of Brent residents.
- That Brent is not legally obliged to provide crematoria; and that provision could be by the private sector or by religious faiths.
- There is unlikely to be space available for crematoria within Brent's cemeteries given the demand on, and need for that space for burials.
- Planning: the location of crematoria would be subject to suitable space availability and to Planning considerations.

There are some interment practices (for example, but not only, the open air pyres, discussed in section 9 of the Equalities Impact Assessment) for which there is no provision within the UK and future provision is unlikely given current legislative and Planning constraints.

**Table 1: Approximate distances by road to crematoria near to Brent**

<b>Approximate distances by road to crematoria near to Brent</b>			
<b>Crematoria</b>	<b>Postcode</b>	<b>Nearest Brent distance</b>	<b>Furthest Brent distance</b>
		miles	miles
Kensal Green	W10 4RA	0	5
Hendon	NW7 1NB	4	8
Golders Green	N11 4NL	4	8
St. Marylebone	N2 0RZ	4	9
East Finchley	N2 9AG	5	9
Mortlake	TW9 4EN	6	11
Breakspear, Ruislip	HA4 7SJ	8	13
Other provision:			
West Herts Crematorium	WD25 0JS	14	19
Liberal Jewish Synagogue	NW10 2HG	0	5

Cemetery			
United Synagogue manages twelve cemeteries including:			
Willesden United Synagogue Cemetery	NW10 2JE	0	5
Bushey Cemetery	WD23 3TP	7	16
Cheshunt, woodland burial, Jewish Joint Burial Society	EN7 5HT	14	18