

Plans to create new burial space at New Southgate cemetery

The cemetery is seeking permission to gain similar powers to London Local Authorities to allow areas in New Southgate cemetery where a burial has not taken place for over 75 years to be re-used.

In response to the general lack of burial space in London, a new law (the London Local Authorities Act 2007) gave the permission to London boroughs to re-use burial space. New Southgate cemetery faces similar pressures and so is seeking the same powers over its burial space as other London local authorities have over theirs.

The method that would be used to create this extra space is known as lift and deepen. Graves are excavated to their deepest depth, with all the remains placed in a casket and re-interred at the bottom of the grave. The City of London Cemetery has already started to re-use burial sections in this way and has created 800 new graves through the lift and deepen method as well as reclaiming hundreds of spaces from existing graves.

A similar course of action at New Southgate will maintain the long term viability of the cemetery. New space would be created for today's bereaved families and a sustainable burial ground could be preserved in the heart of the community it serves.

Without these new powers, remaining space at New Southgate would continue to diminish. Already this has led to a sustained rise in grave prices to try to preserve space for the longer term. The company have tried to address the issue by acquiring additional land but all of the adjoining space is recreational and the local authority objects in principle to losing this land.

The powers that New Southgate is seeking to gain from a Bill to be considered by Parliament are similar to those already afforded to cemeteries run by Local authorities in London. The key provisions are detailed below:

The ability to re-use graves where a burial has not taken place for 75 years or more - In these cases, it is proposed that the remains would be reverently gathered together and then re-buried more deeply. The new space on top could then be offered as a grave for today's bereaved.

- The use of existing space in graves for new burials - In these cases, the grave would have been originally dug for a number of eventual burials which ultimately did not take place. The remaining burial space could then be used for new burials without disturbing any of the original remains.
- If the Bill is passed, all grave owners will be given 6 months' notice to object. Any objection would see any re-use of that grave postponed for a minimum of 25 years.

New Southgate

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- The plans will also be advertised in the local press and within the cemetery whilst the Bill is being considered to encourage grave owners to comment. The cemetery has written to all of the grave owners within the oldest sections of the cemetery in the course of the last ten years (although in many cases the grave owners are no longer alive or have not updated their contact details). Overall, the response to our letters is less than 1% with the vast majority returned by Royal Mail as undeliverable. This is unsurprising as the cemetery was opened in 1856 and many of the families connected with the grave have long since died or moved out of the area. We therefore encourage **anyone who has an interest in a grave within our cemetery to make contact with our office now to ensure that we have your current address and details.**
- Memorials can be collected by families or will be held safely by the cemetery for a further six months after being removed.
- Graves where a burial has taken place within the last 75 years will NOT be disturbed or affected in anyway.

A Private Bill has been submitted to Parliament asking for these powers and a full copy of the Bill can be seen by clicking on the [link here](#).

A helpful summary of the current situation of burial grounds and the need for re-use is also provided within the attached [research paper](#) by the Home Affairs section of the House of Commons Library.

We are very interested to hear your views on this matter and please submit any comments via our [contact form](#).