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Watton Town Council Cemetery Summary Review



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Executive Summary

Based on potential new grave requirement of 25 per annum post 2020, calculations suggest that a cemetery for Watton town Council to last 100 years would occupy approximately 2 hectares.

This figure is derived from current annual average local burial numbers, calculations of predicted death rates per capita of population and then back calculated as a percentage of the national ratio of burial to cremation; currently 80:20 in favour of cremation.

A background desk top survey was undertaken to review areas of land that would fit as a minimum the size of site required and was taken as being 2 hectares. This is then assessed for a number of qualifying criteria, the most important of which are those criteria associated with the risk to groundwater and the environment as the EA are the primary consultees in new cemetery developments.

Much of the region from the desk top study fell within areas that would be considered significant risk to ground or surface waters i.e. Source Protection Zone 1 or 2, well abstraction protection areas, proximity to surface waters and spring lines, or main drainage systems.

Any site falling within an SPZ1 or on a flood plain would be unlikely to obtain consent from the EA as the primary consultee. These areas for the most part were discounted from this stage of the analysis.

Indeed for Watton the only suitable location would be to the south of the Town

Much of the region sits on the Lowestoft Formation these being fluvio glacial deposits and as such are subject to elevated groundwater levels.

This in turn sits on top of the Chalk Formations being the main source of aquiferic water abstraction.

A significant part of the analysis of the sites was to refer to local borehole data to establish the depth to groundwater in proximity to potential sites. In short anything to the North of the Town would not be suitable as ground water levels are <2 m below ground level.

Therefore the opportunities for sites suitable for cemeteries are extremely restricted.

2.0 Introduction

Cemetery Development Services Ltd were commissioned by Watton Town Council to undertake a feasibility study to assess the current burial service and what may be required for the future, this may result in a broad and wide search of land within the enclaves of the Council to review possible sites for a new cemetery.

Watton operates 1 cemetery and has responsibility for the general maintenance of the closed churchyards.

The current cemetery occupies a space excluding pathways of 0.42 hectares. The total free space available by way of time is calculated as between 7-10 years. Therefore by the time the cemetery is full there would have been a total operational life of around 40 years.

This means that on average the total usage is around 100 square metres per annum.

However population growth will continue within the town, and therefore whilst immediate need figures suggest space for cemetery provision not being critical for up to 10 years from now, we estimate that the population growth curve will not be static and the 10 year estimate based on current usage rates will rapidly erode to possibly less than 7 years.

The current cemetery provision, with annual numbers, and future space provision is illustrated below, this is based on the number of interments for years 2012 to 2016 inclusive.

**Burials 2012,
New purchase; 36; – cremated remains; 11 Total 47**

**Burials 2013,
New purchase; 21; – cremated remains; 11 Total 33**

**Burials 2014,
New purchase; 32; – cremated remains; 14 Total 46**

**Burials 2015,
New purchase; 18; – cremated remains; 23 Total 41**

**Burials 2016,
New purchase; 10; – cremated remains; 15 Total 25**

New provision

It should not be under-estimated the time it takes for new land to be acquired. Any new site must be approved by the Environment Agency.

The area around Watton and surrounding districts has very restrictive development opportunities .

The Environment Agency do not allow burial within Source Protection Zone 1 (red) and are quite restrictive even within SPZ 2 (green) locations especially where soils are very conductive as would be the case for the Watton area.

The Figure below illustrates the areas around the Town protected by the SPZ1

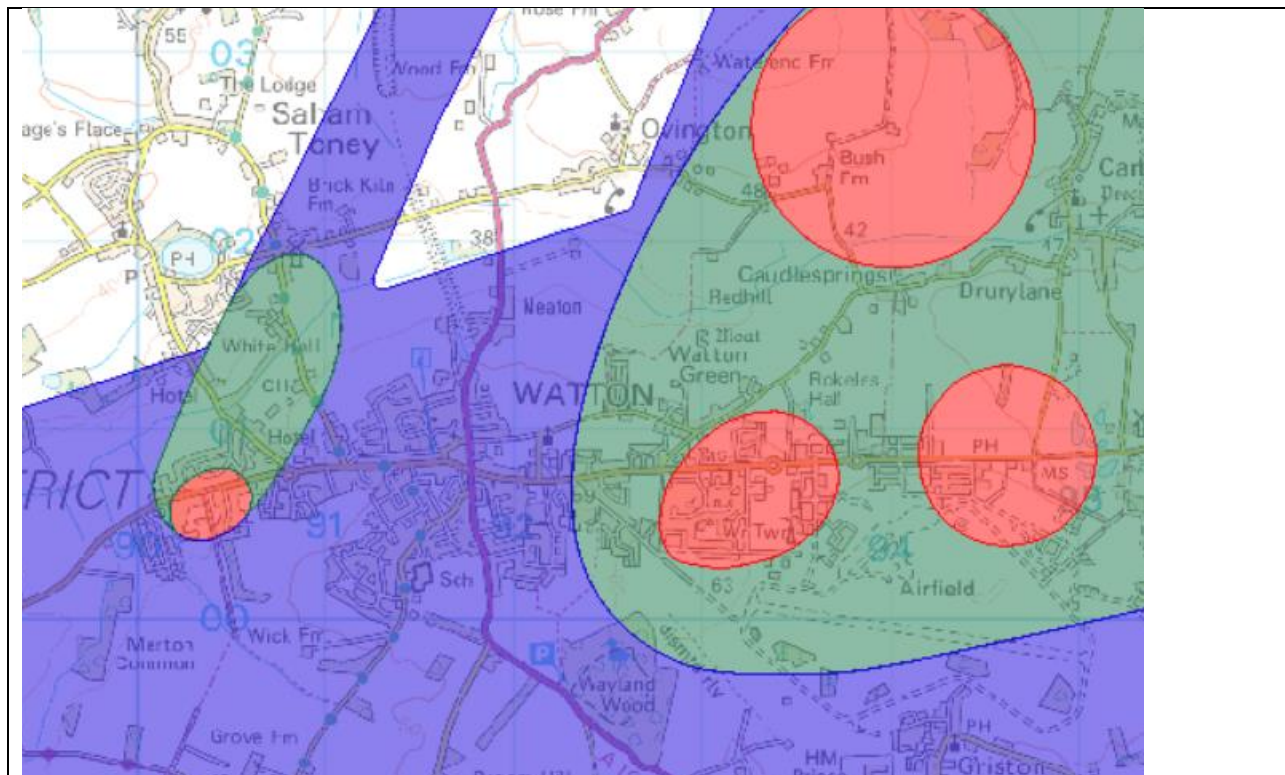


Figure 1 Source Protection Zones

Clearly from figure 1 above areas to the east of the town are going to be very restricted indeed the current cemetery is in an SPZ 2 and under new guidelines would probably be refused planning by the EA today due to its proximity to the SPZ 1.

Therefore new land should be preferably to the north and south of the town to be outside of the SPZ 1 and 2 areas.

The other area for refusal would be the depth to water table and location of any wells.

Wells

Figure 2 shows the location of wells some of these may be licensed for potable water and as such would have a 250 metre exclusion zone around them.

The wells are demarcated by a white box in the middle of the cross.

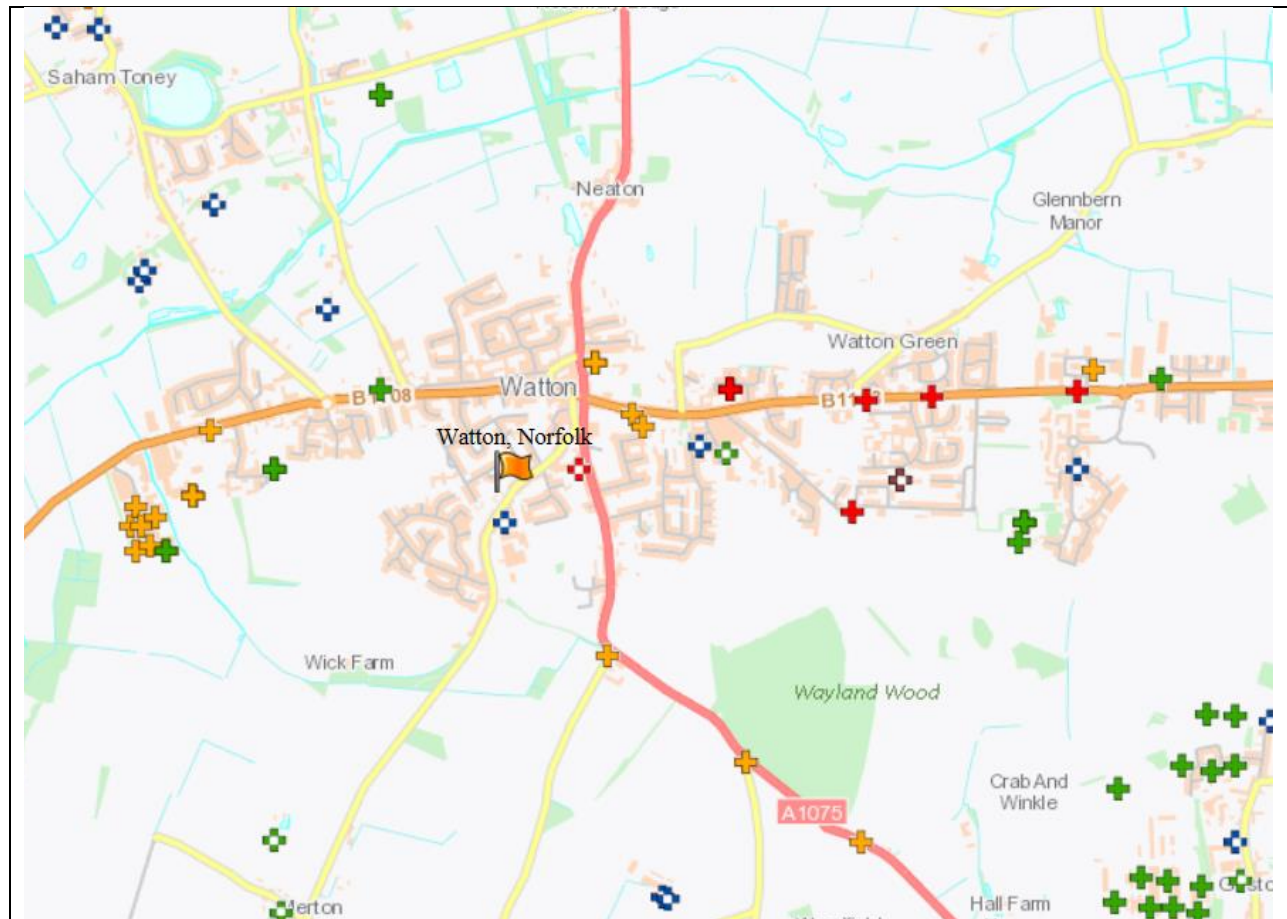


Figure 2 Well locations

Ground Water Levels

A survey of boreholes shows that water levels to the north of the borough are in part dictated by the beck flowing to the north of the town where ground water is probably less than 2 metres below ground level.

Proposed Search Location

Therefore land should preferably be chosen south of the town where ground water levels are likely to be deeper and there are fewer protected zones.

Summary

We would therefore propose that in the first instance the council should make a search of potential sites south of the town.

These sites should then be reviewed for their suitability through site investigation in line with the Environment Agency GP3 guidelines.

We would advise these searches are undertaken soonest as it can take many years for a suitable site to be located, taken through planning, approved and then developed.