



St Helens Burial Space Need and Provision Study Executive Summary

St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council

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1.0 GLOSSARY

Consecrated Land - ground that has been made or declared sacred or holy and is therefore suitable for Christian burial.

Cremation - the disposal of a dead person's body by burning it to cremated remains, typically after a funeral ceremony.

SHMB- St Helens Metropolitan Borough.

SHMBC – St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.

Local Plan - The St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037 was adopted in July 2022, following examination by the Planning Inspectorate.

Mausoleum - A mausoleum is an external, free-standing building constructed as a monument enclosing the interment space or burial chamber of a deceased person or people.

Interment Capacity - Interment Capacity refers to the total number of burials or interments that can be accommodated within a cemetery, mausoleum, or other burial grounds. This capacity takes into account various factors such as:

1. Available Space: The physical space available for graves or crypts.
2. Regulations and Zoning: Local, regional, or national regulations and zoning laws that may limit the number or type of interments allowed.
3. Types of Interment: Different interment methods (e.g., traditional in-ground burial, cremation niches, mausoleum crypts), which may have different space requirements.
4. Land Utilisation: How efficiently the land or space is used, including the layout and design of the burial plots or spaces.
5. Future Provisions: Consideration for future expansions or planned usage of the cemetery or burial grounds.

Spatial Patterns of Interments - Spatial Patterns of Interments refers to the arrangement and distribution of burial sites within a cemetery or burial ground. This concept encompasses several aspects, including:

1. Layout Design: The overall design and organisation of burial plots, which can vary from linear rows to more complex, non-linear patterns.
2. Density: The concentration of interments in different areas, indicating how densely or sparsely the plots are distributed.
3. Zoning: Division of the cemetery into different sections based on criteria such as religious affiliation, type of interment (e.g., in-ground burial, mausoleum), or historical significance.
4. Orientation: The directional placement of graves or crypts, which can be influenced by cultural, religious, or aesthetic considerations.
5. Accessibility: The arrangement of pathways, roads, and open spaces to ensure accessibility and ease of movement within the cemetery.
6. Cultural and Historical Influences: How cultural practices, historical events, or local



customs shape the spatial distribution of interments.

Social infrastructure - refers to facilities and services that support the quality of life in a community. This includes schools, hospitals, community centres, and other services such as burials and cremations, which support the social needs of the population.

Open space - encompasses areas of land that are not built upon and are used for recreation, leisure, and environmental conservation. These spaces can include parks, gardens, playgrounds, and natural reserves.

Future Capacities of Cemeteries - The future capacity of a cemetery refers to the process of a cemetery optimising the use of existing cemetery space to accommodate more burials and memorials, often through innovative and efficient methods. This process can also be called intensification, but for the purposes of this study, it will be referred to as 'future capacity' or simply 'cemetery capacity'. This can include various strategies such as:

1. Reusing Graves: Allowing graves to be reused after a certain period, common in places with limited space.
2. Cremation and Cremation Remains Interment: Encouraging cremation and the interment of cremation remains in smaller plots or niches.
3. Space Optimisation: Reconfiguring existing plots and pathways to create more efficient layouts and increase the number of available plots.

Virgin burial land - Refers to a parcel of land that has never been used for burials before. It is untouched and unaltered, specifically designated and prepared for the purpose of creating a new cemetery or burial ground. This land is typically undeveloped and free from prior graves, ensuring that it is in its natural or original state before being utilised for burial purposes.

Net migration - The difference between the number of people moving into and out of an area. Net migration consists of internal migration, which is the movement of people between local authorities in England, cross-border migration, which is the movement of people between England and the rest of the UK and international migration.

Internal migration - Movement of people between local authorities within England.

Cross-border migration - Movement of people between England and the rest of the UK.

International migration - The movement of people into and out of the UK.

2.0 STUDY SUMMARY

- 2.1.1 The Burial Needs Assessment for St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council provides a comprehensive review of existing burial and cremation provision within the Borough and evaluates the scale of future need based on demographic change, faith requirements and land capacity constraints. The study considers existing cemetery operations, relevant legislation, policy context, environmental constraints, faith and cultural considerations, and the long-term land requirements expected throughout the Local Plan period and beyond. It also assesses potential new sites and strategic options to ensure that St Helens can continue to provide dignified, accessible and sustainable burial and cremation services for its communities.
- 2.1.2 The assessment begins with an appraisal of current provision, noting that St Helens Cemetery and Newton-le-Willows Cemetery have served the Borough for many decades but are now approaching their operational limits, with remaining capacity expected to be exhausted by the mid-2030s for Newton-le-Willows and early 2040s for St. Helens Cemetery. Constraints on expansion vary between the two sites due to surrounding land uses, ownership, and environmental limitations. The study also reviews legislation and policy relevant to burial provision, including national planning policy, the Local Plan evidence base, and updated guidance from the Environment Agency. These requirements shape how and where new burial land can be delivered, ensuring groundwater protection, environmental safeguards and compliance with statutory duties.
- 2.1.3 Cemetery management practices and operational considerations were examined, including burial spacing standards, grave reuse policy, maintenance regimes, and the need to accommodate both traditional burials and ash interments. Consultation with Council officers informed the understanding of current operational pressures and the importance of maintaining inclusive provision for all faiths. The study also undertook demographic analysis and mortality forecasting, demonstrating the expected rise in deaths linked to an ageing population as well as the specific burial needs associated with faith groups that require burial rather than cremation. These factors combine to create increasing pressure on existing sites over the coming decades.
- 2.1.4 Environmental and ecological constraints were considered to ensure that future burial land is deliverable and appropriately sited. Groundwater protection zones, flood risk areas, ecological designations, and landscape character were mapped and reviewed, providing a robust basis for screening potential new locations. Technical considerations such as site access, utilities, topography, soil conditions and drainage were also assessed.
- 2.1.5 A quantitative assessment of need identified the amount of burial and ashes capacity required over time, using standard plot densities and demographic data. It is estimated that around one hectare of new land will be required by 2037 to maintain burial provision, with demand continuing to rise thereafter. Looking to the longer term, approximately 15.7 hectares of land is expected to be required by 2100 to accommodate both burials and interments of ashes. This reflects not only population change but also the requirement to provide virgin burial plots for certain faith groups and to ensure flexibility in service provision for future generations.
- 2.1.6 A long list of potential sites was reviewed through desk-based assessment and site visits, drawing on Council-owned land as well as other possible opportunities. Each location was

examined in relation to planning constraints, environmental suitability, infrastructure, landscape considerations and deliverability. This process enabled the identification of several potential options within the Borough capable of accommodating both medium- and long-term needs. The study also recognises opportunities for incremental expansion at existing cemeteries where feasible, although these are limited and unlikely to meet longer-term demand on their own.

- 2.1.7 Drawing together all findings, the study concludes that St Helens will require a strategic approach to safeguarding and delivering new burial land to maintain adequate provision throughout the Local Plan period and well beyond. The Council will need to progress feasibility work on preferred sites, ensure alignment with environmental and planning policy, and develop a clear burial space policy that reflects demographic need, faith requirements and operational practicalities. By doing so, St Helens will be able to secure resilient and future-proof burial provision that meets the needs of its diverse communities for decades to come.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The Metropolitan Borough of St Helens is a vibrant district in Merseyside, Northwest England, positioned strategically within the Liverpool City Region and covering an area of approximately 53 square miles (136 km²). Named after its largest settlement, the borough comprises diverse communities, with the historic town of St Helens itself. Other towns and villages in St Helens include: Earlestown, Rainhill, Haydock, Billinge, Eccleston, Garswood, Clock Face, Rainford, Parr, Windle, Sutton, Moss Banks, Seneley Green, Bold and Newton-le-Willows.
- 3.1.2 Like many other councils in the UK, St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council are concerned about the future availability of appropriate spaces for burials, and the internment of cremation remains. The Council recognise the need to understand existing burial capacity within the Borough to establish how much capacity will be required within and beyond the Local Plan period (2037) and identify opportunities for sufficient provision to meet the future needs of its residents.

3.2 Study Background

- 3.2.1 St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council (SHMBC) instructed Enzygo to prepare a Burial Needs Assessment (BNA) to provide evidence of existing internment provision within the Borough of St Helens and suitable land for future burial use.
- 3.2.2 The purpose of this study is to:
- Establish and review the internment capacity and provision of available space in existing burial grounds.
 - Access future burial needs in the borough by reviewing historic and future population trends. This will consider how the requirements of different religious groups can be met.
 - Assess whether any suitable sites within the borough could come forward to address future needs, including cemetery extensions.
- 3.2.3 The assessment considers the Council's identified needs in national, regional and local targets for homes, employment and infrastructure provision.
- 3.2.4 There are currently no policies relating to burial space within the St Helens Borough Local Plan (up to 2037 - adopted in July 2022). As such, it is expected that this report will also provide evidence to support and inform the Borough's next Local Plan review and assist in the creation of a suitably worded policy if it is felt appropriate.
- 3.2.5 In addition to informing a Local Plan review, this study will be used by the Council and partners to inform any planning applications for new cemeteries.
- 3.2.6 The study has considered all potential options for meeting future burial needs, including identifying suitable new sites as well as opportunities for increasing cemetery capacity or extension within existing cemeteries. This has been undertaken with the understanding that the Council is already aware of the limited capacity remaining within its existing provision, but seeks both confirmation of these findings, detailed information on current capacity and the

identification of additional opportunities. A more detailed second phase of this report examines the suitability of the potential sites in greater depth.

3.3 Types of Burial Sites

3.3.1 The term ‘cemeteries’ is used to describe places where the remains of deceased people are buried or otherwise interred, provided and maintained by a burial authority. Anyone who is a resident in a parish or who dies in a parish has the common law right of burial in the churchyard or other consecrated burial ground of that parish (unless it has been closed by Order of the Council). This right has been extended to all those whose names are on the electoral roll at the time of death.

3.3.2 Burial law is governed by a patchwork of legislation, some of which dates to the 1850s. There are different laws in place for burial grounds, which are operated by local authorities, the Church of England, and private burial grounds. This complex picture has emerged as a result of different historical developments. It means that there are gaps in the safeguards which protect the dignity of the people who are buried in burial grounds. The legal framework is set out in more detail in Section 5.2 of this Assessment.

3.3.3 There is a range of types of cemeteries where burials can take place and cremation remains can be buried, most notably:

- **Church graveyards** - This term generally refers to a cemetery associated with a church. This may consist of ‘consecrated land’ (declared by the church to be sacred) or non-consecrated land, or a mixture of both.
- **Traditional cemeteries** - The majority of cemeteries are non-denominational, and most types of funeral service or ceremony can be conducted there. Traditional cemeteries have often been used for generations and consist of upright monuments, usually made of stone.
- **Memorial parks and gardens** - These are a newer type of cemetery and generally have memorials and plaques rather than tombstones. As with traditional cemeteries, these are generally non-denominational.
- **Natural Burial sites** - These are often privately owned burial sites and reflect an interest in more environmentally friendly forms of body disposal.

3.3.4 Generally, cremation remains can be buried in any of the above sites, either within an existing burial plot or in a separate, smaller plot.

3.4 Report Methodology and Format

3.4.1 The study methodology comprises the following key stages:

- Establishing existing laws and legal requirements in the burial and cremation provision
- Establishing the historic and future trends of those in the borough
- Identifying the need for future burial land and cremation ash space based on the existing capacity and future needs
- Identifying possible future options.

3.4.2 Based on the key stages set out above, the structure of this report is as follows:

- Chapter 4: Short overview of St Helens



- Chapter 5: Legal requirements and planning policy
- Chapter 6: Analysis of existing burial and cremation sites
- Chapter 7: Mortality and demographic analysis of St Helens
- Chapter 8: Investigating the need for burial provision
- Chapter 9: Explores and identifies the options for burial space
- Chapter 10: Next steps, summary and conclusions.

3.4.3 The structure of this report is defined by each key stage.

4.0 ST HELENS HISTORICAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

4.1.1 St Helens is a borough in Merseyside, Northwest England, historically shaped by the Industrial Revolution. The town lies strategically between Liverpool and Manchester in the heart of the Northwest Merseyside conurbation. Due to this location, the borough has close ties to the Liverpool City Region as well as West Lancashire.



Figure 4.1: St Helens Sub-regional Context (SHMBC Local Plan)

4.1.2 St Helens has evolved into the place it is today through its rich industrial heritage and enduring sense of identity. Its rapid expansion during the 18th and 19th centuries was driven by major industries such as coal mining, world-renowned glassmaking, chemical production, and railway engineering, all of which helped to define the borough’s national reputation. By the mid-twentieth century, St Helens employed around 30,000 glass workers and 20,000 miners, alongside thousands more in related industries¹

¹ <https://new.sthelens.gov.uk/media/2323/a-brief-history-of-st-helens.pdf>

- 4.1.1 Newton-le-Willows also played a significant role in the borough's industrial development, with a strong focus on railway engineering, sugar refining, and printing. One of the most notable industrial legacies is Pilkington, founded in the 1820s, which became a world leader in glass manufacturing and remains an integral part of the town's identity today. The borough is also home to the world's first railway viaduct. The Sankey Viaduct (Grade I Listed) opened in 1830 to carry Stephenson's Liverpool-Manchester Railway over the canal at Newton, symbolising the area's historic importance in engineering innovation. Today, St Helens has a population of around 180,000, with a mix of urban neighbourhoods, former mining villages and greenbelt land. While the decline of heavy industry has brought economic and social challenges, regeneration initiatives have focused on diversifying the economy, strengthening cultural life, and improving public spaces.
- 4.1.2 The strategic position of St Helens, being well located to the significant employment hubs of Manchester and Liverpool, has helped to ensure the continued growth despite industrial decline. Improvements to roads and railways have further aided this growth, allowing ease of movement and economic stability, together with significant levels of new housing.
- 4.1.3 Through all these changes, St Helens still retains several notable pre-industrial heritage buildings and structures. One of the most renowned examples is the fifteenth-century Windleshaw Chantry (Grade II*) located within St Helens Cemetery, and even older, fragmented structures are present in cemeteries in Newton-le-Willows, Rainhill, and Rainford.
- 4.1.4 The town of St Helens retains a distinct local identity rooted in its industrial heritage, resilience and community networks. Rugby league, particularly St Helens R.F.C. ("the Saints"), plays a central role in civic pride. St Helens is also increasingly positioning itself within the wider Liverpool City Region, balancing its industrial legacy with aspirations for sustainable growth and cultural renewal.
- 4.1.5 There are also many distinct settlements large enough to provide a range of facilities and services to meet the needs of many day-to-day households.
- 4.1.6 St Helens Borough has a unique heritage, based upon its history connected with the railways, mining, glass and other industries. The Council seeks to conserve the Borough's historic environment and promote awareness of its shared heritage, including Registered Parks and Gardens. There are currently three Registered Parks and Gardens in the Borough, including St Helens Cemetery in Windle.
- 4.1.7 Future developments must be sensitive to the historic heritage and avoid causing harm to an asset's setting, including key views and should not prejudice their future restoration.

5.0 LEGAL REQUIREMENTS AND PLANNING POLICY

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This chapter details the legal framework in relation to burials and space for cremation remains, together with an analysis of the relevant national and local policy context and identification of environmental requirements.
- 5.1.2 Burial facilities can be considered both a form of social infrastructure and a part of open space provision. Burial facilities, such as cemeteries, serve an essential role in society by providing a place for the respectful and dignified conduct of the deceased. They are important for cultural, religious, and personal reasons, offering a space for mourning, remembrance, and community gatherings.
- 5.1.3 Burial grounds are not simply places for the burial of the dead. They provide areas for the living to commemorate those who have died, a focal point to record and appreciate the life, aesthetics and ethos of previous generations. By default, or design, a lightly used, largely unbuilt environment, cemeteries and other burial grounds also often function as green spaces within urban and rural areas. They can provide ecological benefits, such as supporting biodiversity, acting as carbon sinks, and contributing to the urban green network. Additionally, they offer recreational opportunities for walking and quiet reflection. However, they don't have the same functionality as other forms of open space, such as parks or sports pitches and have better functionality for quiet contemplation, especially if closed.
- 5.1.4 In planning terms, cemeteries are Use Class Sui Generis. "Sui generis" is a Latin term meaning "of its own kind" and is used for uses that do not fall within the specific classes defined by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments. This classification indicates that cemeteries are recognised as having a unique use that does not fit neatly into a specific category. Consequently, planning permission would be required for any new cemetery or cemetery extension.

5.2 Burial Law

- 5.2.1 The Ministry of Justice is responsible for burial law, and since the 1850s, the national government has passed responsibility for burials on to local authorities. Despite this, there is currently no statutory duty upon Local Authorities to provide burial space for their residents, although there is a requirement for them to maintain existing cemeteries they own.
- 5.2.2 Currently, Local Authorities are not required by law to provide burial space for residents, but some councils have a management plan for the space they manage. However, such provision is at the discretion of the relevant Local Authorities or other parties, depending on historical provision or demand. This study is considering available space for future council and private sites and not the onward management plan for council-owned sites.
- 5.2.3 However, several Acts of Parliament provide Local Authorities with legislative powers relating to burial land provision. The Local Government Act 1972 recognises Local Authorities as burial authorities, along with the Cremations Act of 1902 and 1952 (Section 214 (1) and (5)). It allows burial authorities to provide and maintain cemeteries inside and outside of their administrative areas (Section 214 (2)) and to contribute towards any expenses incurred by third parties in

providing or maintaining a cemetery in which the residents of the authority's area may be buried (Section 214 (6)).

- 5.2.4 Section 25 of the Burial Act 1857 does not apply if the following condition is employed: 'the body or remains is or are removed in accordance with a faculty granted by the court'.
- 5.2.5 As stated above, in specified circumstances, burial authorities may 'reclaim' a private grave and then use the remaining space in it for further burial, where the burial rights have not been exercised for 75 years or more, and notice has been published².
- 5.2.6 St Helens burial authorities also have the power to disturb remains in private graves older than 75 years for the purpose of deepening the grave to allow further burials to take place. The power to re-use graves is a sustainable but limited response to the supply of new burial spaces in St Helens. It should be noted that due to the sensitivities around such measures, St Helens Council have expressed the desire for this option to be included but not focused upon. Both St Helens Cemetery and Newton-le-Willows Cemetery contain historic graves that are regularly visited by residents. Re-use of graves in this context is not deemed the most appropriate response at this time.

5.3 Environmental Legislation

- 5.3.1 Regarding other burial legislation, the Environment Agency (EA) are involved in the regulation of new cemetery developments and existing cemeteries through their duty set out in The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016³.
- 5.3.2 The Agency ensures that the operations of cemeteries pose no harm to the environment, especially in terms of groundwater pollution. Should pollution occur, the Environment Agency will act proportionately and appropriately to the harm being caused. The EA has recently updated its guidance for local authorities and other cemetery operators in respect of protecting groundwater from human burials (25 June 2025). The EA has position statements detailing its approach to groundwater protection when dealing with cemeteries and Regulations 2016. These are being reviewed and updated due to changes to the Environmental Permitting, which came into effect in 2023⁴.
- 5.3.3 Should any of the sites identified be selected to be taken forward, a more detailed assessment of the identified constraints should be undertaken.

5.4 Planning Policies Relating to Burial Space

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- 5.4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the current Government's planning policies for England. Sustainable development lies at the core of the NPPF, which requires economic, social and environmental roles to be considered for all aspects of development. The

²<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn04060/#:~:text=Under%20the%20Local%20Authorities%20Cemeteries,further%20burials%20to%20take%20place.>

³ The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016

⁴ Protecting groundwater from human burials - GOV.UK

Within the NPPF, whilst there is no specific reference to burial needs, other than Paragraph 154, which relates to cemeteries within the Green Belt. Given that much of the Borough is located within the Green Belt, this section is relevant.

- 5.4.2 Despite limited reference to churchyards and cemeteries themselves, many other references within the NPPF would apply to development associated with burial/cremation ash space development. Sustainable development includes considering the economic, social and environmental role of development. In terms of an economic role, any development must ensure it is located in an appropriate location so as not to prevent other economic benefits from being achieved. This could include considering the potential of proposed sites for other types of development (e.g. mineral extraction; housing). In addition, sites must be in an appropriate location for the need and ensure existing infrastructure (i.e. roads) is appropriate, or can be made appropriate, to ensure the land can be fully utilised.
- 5.4.3 In terms of providing a social role, the location of any further development must ensure it can meet the needs of the local community, and contribute to creating a '*...high quality built environment...*' For example, burial spaces can contribute to wider social benefits such as providing areas of open space.
- 5.4.4 Section 12 considers 'Achieving well-designed places'. This identifies the need for good planning, which should contribute positively to making places better for people. Development should be functional over the lifetime of the development and reflect the identity of the local surroundings and materials. In addition, the design should create a safe and accessible environment and be visually attractive. Based on this, any new, extended or intensified burial space would require a high-quality and appropriate design.
- 5.4.5 In terms of an environmental role, burial grounds can contribute to enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, and contribute to improving biodiversity. In addition, large areas of permeable open space (i.e. grass) can contribute to reducing flood risk and thus mitigating the impacts of climate change. Section 15 considers 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.' This requires development to protect and enhance valued landscapes and minimise impacts on biodiversity, and provide net gains where possible. This requires development to protect and enhance valued landscapes and minimise impacts on biodiversity, and provide net gains where possible. Any new development proposed as a result of this study must ensure valued landscapes are protected and contribute to biodiversity gains in line with the NPPF.
- 5.4.6 Section 5 considers 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes'. This requires a sufficient amount and variety of land to come forward where it is needed. Local Planning policy allocates sites for housing within the Borough, and these housing allocations have been considered when reviewing potential suitable sites.
- 5.4.7 Section 8 'Promoting healthy and safe communities' relates in part to 'Open space', of which cemeteries are included within the definition. Access to a network of high-quality open spaces is important for the health and well-being of communities.

- 5.4.8 Cemeteries and other burial grounds often function as green spaces within urban and rural areas. They can provide ecological benefits, such as supporting biodiversity, acting as carbon sinks, and contributing to the urban green infrastructure. Additionally, they offer recreational opportunities for walking and quiet reflection. However, they cannot provide the full range of sports and recreational facilities.
- 5.4.9 Section 9 ‘Promoting sustainable transport’ supports the use of existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and seeks to pursue ‘opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport’. The provision of burial space must be in an appropriate location for the benefits to be fully achieved. Any sites should (if possible) benefit from existing infrastructure (i.e. access roads, public transport options) or be in a location where infrastructure could be provided relatively simply (i.e. without the need for large levels of new infrastructure). A specific example of this is extending existing facilities, which already have the required infrastructure in place, as a preference to developing entirely new sites.
- 5.4.10 When considering increasing the capacity or extending existing and any potential new sites, accessibility, including via sustainable means of transport, has been considered. Travel options via private car and public transport networks in relation to sites have been considered in this report.
- 5.4.11 Section 11 relates to ‘Making effective use of land’ and highlights the importance of encouraging multiple benefits from land and recognising that land can perform many functions.
- 5.4.12 Section 14 addresses ‘Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change’. The Environment Agency provides guidance on managing cemeteries and burials to prevent groundwater pollution and sets out in more detail in the section on environmental constraints set out in chapter 10.
- 5.4.13 Section 16 considers ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.’ Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations
- 5.4.14 Overall, the NPPF sets out requirements which must be taken into account for all types of development in order to contribute to sustainable development. As part of any proposed development recommended as part of this study, a full assessment of the NPPF and local planning policy would be required to ensure the development constitutes sustainable development.

Spatial Development Strategy for Liverpool City Region up to 2040

- 5.4.15 The Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) allows the Liverpool City Region to develop its own distinctive planning strategy in response to the issues and opportunities present. The SDS will set out the Mayoral Combined Authority’s overall strategy for spatial development at a city-region-wide scale through strategic planning policies concerning development and land use, looking ahead to 2040. Currently, the SDS is at stage 3 of 6, having started stage 1 in late 2019 and expecting adoption after 2026. It is anticipated that the next draft version of the SDS will be published for consultation in late 2026 (Stage 4 ‘Public Participation’).

- 5.4.16 In December 2024, the current government reformed the standard method to calculate local housing need. This was published in the revised NPPF in December 2024, and the reformed standard method uses housing stock data as the starting point to establish the baseline figure for housing need (before any adjustments are applied for affordability).
- 5.4.17 More recently, the publication of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill in March 2025, which received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025, changes the status and impact of an SDS, most notably the ability for a strategic authority to allocate housing targets for each Council. These housing targets will have to reflect the new standard method, almost doubling the housing target across the whole LCRCA. Within St Helens, under the proposed standard housing method, 825 new homes will be required per annum compared with 391 under the current method, and this represents a 111% increase. The Council will be required to respond to the level of development set out in the SDS including infrastructure and cemetery provision.
- 5.4.18 While there are no specific policies relating to burials or cemeteries, key policies that need to be addressed when considering burial provision in the Borough are summarised as :
- **Policy LCR SP6:** Green and Blue Infrastructure states ‘The city region’s multifunctional network of green and blue infrastructure includes: parks, gardens, playing fields, allotments, amenity and other open space.’ Burial sites can be considered as part of the multifunctional green infrastructure network, which the policy aims to protect and expand. A burial site can serve not just as a place of rest, but also as a tranquil green space, supporting goals for sustainable and community-enhancing infrastructure.
 - **Policy LCR SP10:** Rural City Region supports the ‘long-term sustainability of communities, the economy and the environment (both natural and built).’ Burial sites are low-impact, community-serving developments that can contribute to the sustainability of local services. Where sites are sensitively designed, they can enhance the rural character and landscape value, aligning with the policy’s objectives for environmental stewardship and local service provision.
 - **Policy LCR DP7:** The Natural Environment and Nature Recovery states the importance of ‘supporting nature recovery’, mitigating and adapting to climate change and offering health and wellbeing benefits.’ It also ensures that ‘green and blue infrastructure is protected, enhanced, maintained and expanded in an integrated way with opportunities for public access secured where appropriate.’ Sensitive burial design considering the local landscape and ecological context can contribute to the aims of this policy (and Policy LCR SP6) by supporting habitat creation, maintaining and improving biodiversity, and offering accessible green spaces that deliver both environmental and health benefits.
 - **Policy LCR DP8:** Making the Best Use of Land states that ‘development plans and proposals should ensure the efficient and effective use of land.’ Including ‘recognising the role and potential of some previously developed/brownfield land for a range of sustainable uses, including green and blue infrastructure.’ The repurposing of underutilised or brownfield land for community facilities, where appropriate, is relevant to the identification of burial sites. Burial grounds, which are generally a low-intensity use, can offer environmental and amenity value, especially when integrated with green infrastructure principles.

- **Policy LCR DP13:** Water Management and Flood Risk states ‘proposals should plan positively to ensure an integrated approach to water management to improve water quality, water resources and reduce the risk of flooding, both currently and in the future, for people and wildlife.’ Burial sites must be located in areas with a low flood risk to prevent water contamination and protect public health and environmental quality.

5.4.19 Other relevant policies:

- Policy LCR DP16: Delivering Social Value
- Policy LCR DP1: Planning for Climate Change
- Policy LCR DP2: Sustainable and Inclusive Communities
- Policy LCR DP4: Promoting Health and Wellbeing
- Policy LCR SP5 City and Town Centres
- Policy LCR DP2: Sustainable and Inclusive Communities

5.5 Local Planning Policy

St Helens Borough Local Plan Up To 2037 (adopted 2022)

5.5.1 The St Helens adopted Local Plan comprises:

- St Helens Borough Local Plan (2022)
- Local Plan Policies Map (2022)

5.5.2 The St Helens Local Plan sets out a vision and framework and policies to guide development in the borough until 2037. Any proposals considering the provision of any potential new cemetery will be assessed against these policies. While there are no policies specifically relating to burial provision, there are still policies that are relevant to the principle of development, especially concerning aspects such as future development and protecting green spaces.

5.5.3 The key policies that need to be addressed when considering burial provision in the Borough are:

5.5.4 **Policy LPA01: Spatial Strategy** focuses on ensuring sustainable regeneration and growth within the borough and delivering infrastructure that will support communities, as well as promoting efficient use of land.

5.5.5 **Policy LPA02: Development Principles** ensures that any new development within the borough has a ‘*sustainable and balanced approach*’ and meets the needs of all St Helens residents. This assessment will ensure responsible burial practices and provide strategically planned burial provision in suitable locations.

5.5.6 **Policy LPC05: Open Space** sets out the borough's commitment to maintaining and preserving high-quality, accessible, and multifunctional open spaces that support health, biodiversity, and community value. Cemeteries and churchyards are categorised under open spaces within this policy. This Burial Needs Assessment plays a strategic role in aligning burial provision with the open space objectives.

5.5.7 When planning for possible extensions and new cemeteries, it is essential to consider the protection of existing open space. Cemeteries can provide valuable opportunities to strengthen green infrastructure, offering biodiversity benefits, recreational value, and landscape

connectivity. Strategic planning should therefore aim to accommodate burial needs in a way that not only safeguards but also adds to the multifunctional role of green infrastructure across the borough.

- 5.5.8 With thoughtful location and design, new cemeteries can be integrated in ways that respect and enhance the open space network, delivering environmental and community benefits. However, it is recognised that burial grounds do not provide the same range of recreational functions as parks, play areas, or sports facilities, and this limitation must be taken into account when assessing their role within the wider open space provision.
- 5.5.9 **Policy LPC07: Greenways** refers to a strategic network of linear green infrastructure, such as paths, bridleways, disused railway lines, and natural corridors that provide connections for people and wildlife. As previously stated, cemeteries are categorised under open space and often also serve as essential places for wildlife to thrive, thus supporting this policy. Additionally, this policy mentions the importance of connecting people from urban to rural areas. In many cemeteries, internal paths link to the wider public rights of way or cycle route network, further supporting this policy's objectives.
- 5.5.10 **Policy LPC09: Landscape Protection and Enhancement** seeks to '*protects and enhances the visual, cultural and historical character of the Borough's landscape*'. The burial needs assessment will ensure sites are in keeping with the local character and history of the area.

Local Plan Policies Map (2022)

- 5.5.11 The Local Plan Policies Map identifies policy designations across the whole of the Borough. Any future provision will need to ensure that relevant designations are considered to ensure that any proposal would not conflict with existing land use designations. Information provided by the Council has, however, confirmed the following;
- St Helens Cemetery is designated under the open space policy
 - GreenAcres is allocated as green belt
 - All other church cemeteries are designated under other Local Plan Policies
- 5.5.12 All sites within the borough have been reviewed against the current Policies Map, including designated housing allocations and areas of employment land. To ensure completeness and accuracy, any gaps or omissions in the available information have been addressed using supplementary mapping data provided by the council's GIS team. This collaborative approach has supported a comprehensive and robust assessment of the potential sites identified.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Design

- 5.5.13 The Design SPD sets out principles that, while not specific to burial provision, are relevant to the identification and development of new cemetery sites. It emphasises the need for a strong understanding of site context, covering ground conditions, topography, drainage, flood risk and water environment constraints, all of which are essential considerations when assessing land for burials or ashes interments. The Design SPD also places significant weight on landscape character and biodiversity, encouraging development that protects and enhances existing habitats, integrates green infrastructure, and contributes positively to ecological networks. Cemetery sites, being typically green and low-intensity, align with this approach.

- 5.5.14 Sustainable drainage forms another important theme, with the document promoting early incorporation of SuDS such as infiltration features, swales and rain gardens. This supports the need for cemetery developments to demonstrate safe surface water management without increasing flood risk or affecting groundwater. The SPD also highlights expectations around safe and accessible site access, movement and parking, all of which are relevant to ensuring cemetery layouts can accommodate visitors while connecting to the surrounding network.
- 5.5.15 The SPD also requires development to respond positively to local character and landscape qualities, using materials, planting and layout to create places that are attractive, distinctive and respectful of their setting. This reinforces the importance of designing burial spaces that are reflective of their surroundings and capable of delivering long-term environmental and community benefits.

Open Space Provision and Enhancement

- 5.5.16 The Open Space Provision and Enhancement SPD provide guidance on how new development in St Helens should protect, enhance and integrate open space. Although not directly related to burial provision, several themes are relevant to assessing and designing new cemetery land. The SPD emphasises the value of open space for recreation, quiet contemplation, biodiversity and health, reflecting the importance of creating high-quality green environments. Cemeteries are typically recognised as an open space, and while the SPD does not require developers to provide them, the principles for creating well-designed, accessible and multifunctional green spaces are applicable.
- 5.5.17 A strong focus of the SPD is understanding existing provision, assessing quality, accessibility and quantity, and ensuring new development contributes positively to green networks. This aligns with the need for cemetery sites to integrate into the wider landscape, avoid the loss of valued open space, and consider how new burial land strengthens local green infrastructure. The SPD highlights the importance of biodiversity, ecological networks and nature recovery, supporting approaches where cemetery land can enhance habitat connectivity and contribute to long-term ecological enhancement, consistent with wider planning and environmental objectives.
- 5.5.18 The document also stresses the importance of well-designed open spaces that are safe, accessible, multifunctional and connected to walking and cycling routes. These expectations are relevant to cemetery developments, which must demonstrate appropriate accessibility, good site integration and sensitive landscape design. The SPD encourages the use of naturalistic planting, high-quality materials and layouts that support both people and wildlife, principles which can support placemaking within new burial grounds.

Travel and Transport

- 5.5.19 The Transport and Travel SPD sets out expectations for creating well-connected, accessible and sustainable development, which are relevant when considering new cemetery sites. It promotes a “Decide and Provide” approach focused on reducing car dependency and improving conditions for walking, cycling and public transport. This supports the need for cemeteries to be located and designed with safe, legible access for all users, not relying solely on private vehicles.
- 5.5.20 The SPD emphasises inclusive design, requiring developments to provide safe routes, clear movement patterns and appropriate accessibility for people with limited mobility. For cemeteries, this reinforces the importance of well-designed pedestrian connections, suitable

parking and layouts that integrate sensitively with surrounding transport networks.

- 5.5.21 It also outlines requirements for transport information in planning applications, highlighting that proposals must demonstrate safe access, sufficient parking and appropriate service vehicle arrangements, even where overall trip generation is low. The SPD further encourages the provision of EV charging infrastructure and efficient management of maintenance and service vehicle movements, which are relevant to ongoing cemetery operations.

6.0 EXISTING BURIAL AND CREMATION SITES ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 In order to inform this study, it is necessary to understand the existing burial and cemetery provision within SHMB. This chapter examines the existing cemeteries within SHMB and their capacity to meet current and future burial needs. Rather than assessing the opportunities for future cemetery capacity within existing cemeteries, this study used established published data confirming the remaining capacity at its two council-run sites (St Helens and Newton-le-Willows) and the anticipated timescale over which this capacity is expected to be sufficient to meet requirements.
- 6.1.2 The remaining cemeteries have been contacted individually and asked to provide, if possible, whether they are still accepting burials, their current capacity and how many plot spaces they have available until they will be at capacity.
- 6.1.3 While the primary purpose of this report is to identify if a new potential cemetery site(s) is required and whether they can be allocated or safeguarded to meet future demand once existing plots are exhausted, it is important to understand the wider context for burial provision in the borough.
- 6.1.4 The assessment considers both the main St Helens Cemetery and Newton-le-Willows Cemetery, as these are the two main public cemeteries in the area. St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium was extended in 2010, and current projections indicate that its remaining capacity will be sufficient until 2040. Newton-le-Willows Cemetery, by contrast, is located in an area that has experienced significant housing growth with little opportunity for expansion. The rate at which new burial plots are likely to be required there means its existing capacity is expected to be exhausted sooner by 2036, highlighting the need to plan for additional provision in that geographical location.
- 6.1.5 This chapter also takes account of projected growth across the borough, and the implications for future burial demand have been considered. This provides context for understanding the scale and location of new cemetery sites required to ensure continuity of provision across St Helens Borough.

6.2 Existing Cemeteries and Their Capacity

- 6.2.1 Most of St. Helens cemeteries and churchyards are either at or near capacity, with the rest having been closed for some time. Because of this, they make only a minimal contribution to meeting future burial needs.
- 6.2.2 As stated in the introduction, the cemeteries in the Borough have been contacted individually and asked to provide whether they are still accepting burials, their current capacity and how many plot spaces they have available until they are at capacity. However, it has not been possible to accurately determine the available capacity of each site through this desk-based assessment:
- St Peter's Parr Church of England Cemetery – Only space for cremation remains.
 - St Nicholas Churchyard – C. 50 plots and 50 spaces for cremation remains.
 - St Ann's Church – Closed.
 - Emmanuel Parish Church – Closed.

- St Mary & St John R C Church – Only space for cremation remains.

6.2.3 In addition, there is one notable private cemetery at GreenAcres Rainford Cemetery, located in Rainford, west of Blindfoot Road. The Rainford site serves a wider sub-regional role for people to choose an alternative solution. It is not considered a primary source of provision for the borough's overall burial needs.

Knowsley Cemetery Extension

6.2.4 A recent planning application (P/2025/0143/FUL)⁵ for the extension of Knowsley Cemetery into a portion of Whiston Woods, off Cumber Lane, was approved on the 4th of November 2025. As of November 2025, the Committee have moved to grant permission and the application is expected to gain permission, subject to any legal challenge after the planning permission has been issued. Knowsley Cemetery lies along the boundary between Rainhill and Whiston and falls within the administrative area of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC). The proposed expansion is on land that is within St Helens, thereby making it relevant to the Borough's overall future burial provision.

6.2.5 The application scheme comprises the creation of approximately 5,447 new plots (approximately 3,800 burial plots and 1,647 cremated remains plots). This demonstrates an assumption of a 70-30 split in favour of burial over cremation.

6.2.6 From a St Helens Borough perspective, the cemetery extension is of strategic importance. It will contribute to the long-term provision of burial capacity primarily for the residents of Knowsley, but will also have the potential to cater for the wider southwestern St Helens area, alleviating future pressure on local cemetery infrastructure.



Figure 6.1 Proposed Knowsley Cemetery Extension, Whiston Wood

⁵ (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Planning Committee, 04/11/2025 17:30

St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium

- 6.2.7 St Helens Cemetery is a Grade II listed Park and Garden identified in the National Heritage List for England, Historic England: Listing Number 1001662⁶ was established in the mid-19th century in response to the town's rapid industrial growth and corresponding population increase⁷. As traditional churchyards reached capacity, the need for a larger, municipal burial ground became clear, leading to the creation of St Helens Cemetery, which has since served as the principal burial site for the borough.



Figure 6.2: Historic picture of St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium (provided by SHMBC)

- 6.2.8 The adjoining crematorium was developed later to provide an alternative to traditional burial, reflecting changing societal attitudes (and available space) and the growing demand for cremation during the 20th century. Together, the cemetery and crematorium have played a central role in the town's social and cultural history, providing a place of remembrance for generations of residents.
- 6.2.9 In 2010, the site was extended to the south to accommodate future needs, ensuring continuity of provision for local communities. It was estimated that this extension would allow for 25-30 years of capacity⁸. Today, St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium remains a key public facility maintained by St Helens Borough Council, valued both for its functional role and as a landscaped heritage asset within the borough.

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001662>

⁷ <https://www.friendsofsthelenscemetery.co.uk/history-of-st-helens-cemetery>

⁸ <https://harrisondd.co.uk/projects/st-helens-cemetery-st-helens/>

6.2.10 In 2025, the cemetery was shortlisted for the Cemetery of the Year awards and ultimately won, reflecting the hard work and care that had gone into maintaining and improving the grounds.

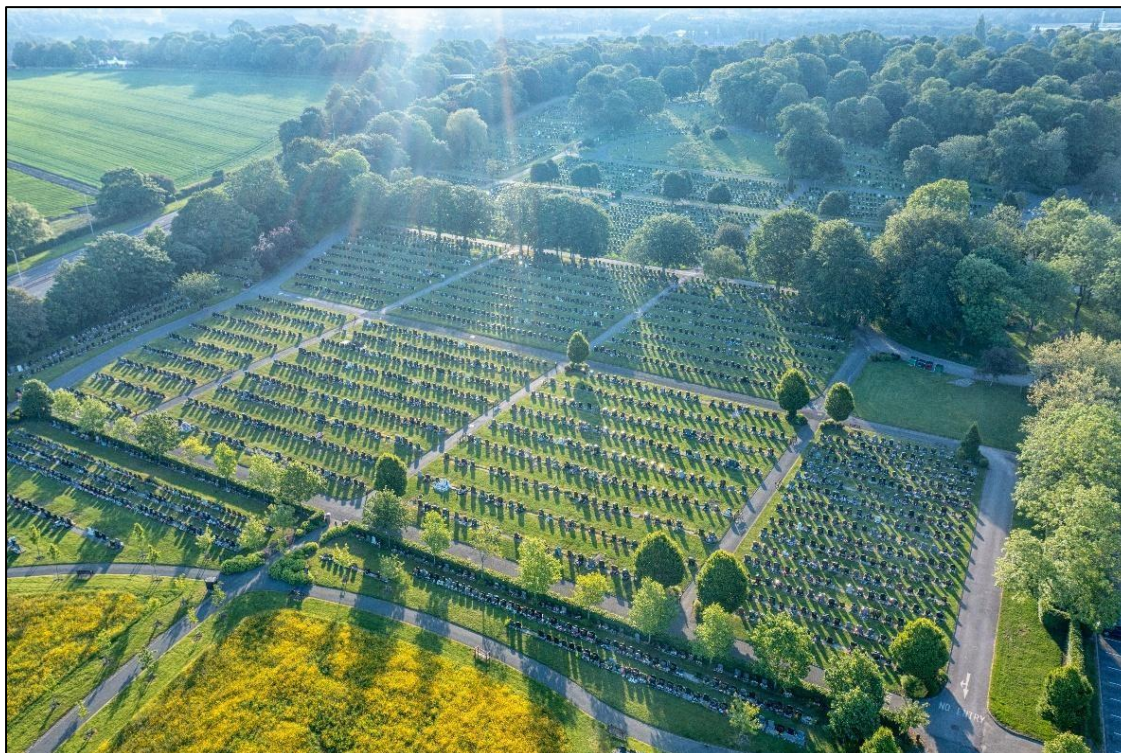


Figure 6.3: Aerial view of St Helens Cemetery (provided by SHMBC)

St Helens Cemetery Remaining Grave Space (March 2025)

6.2.11 The existing burial capacity identified within the St Helens Cemetery is detailed in Table 6.1 below. The table shows the number of burials between 2008 and 2024/2025, the remaining burial spaces and the remaining number of spaces for cremation ashes and an approximate date when there will be no further.

6.2.12 The data for St Helens Cemetery and Newton-le-Willows Cemetery have been provided by SHMBC. It should be noted that this study is dependent upon the figures listed in Table 6.1 and Table 6.2 being accurate, or at least reasonably accurate. If, at a later date, figures are found to be significantly inaccurate, the findings should be reconsidered to address this issue at the non-technical level.

Table 6.1: St Helens Cemetery Remaining Grave Space update March 2025 (SHMBC Completed 3/10/2025)

	Total Burials 2006-2025	Remaining Plots	Forecast Capacity	Anticipated Date of capacity being met ⁹
Full Burials in New Graves	2386	1997	2995 ¹⁰ (5991)	2048 (2040)

⁹ Note: Cremated remains plots are released on a phased basis in line with demand. Although currently released plots are forecast to reach capacity in 2026, additional space remains available and will be brought forward as required.

¹⁰ The figure of 2995 assumes an average of 1.5 burials per plot

Cremated Remains Burials in New Graves	3156	212	1272	2026
Muslim Burial Spaces	22	302	906	2045

6.2.13 It has been confirmed that there are currently no plans to further expand St Helens Cemetery to accommodate future growth to 2040 and beyond, particularly as the site benefited from the significant extension undertaken in 2010.

Newton-le-Willows Cemetery

6.2.14 Newton-le-Willows Cemetery was established in 1885 following the identification of a portion of Newton Hall Farm (approximately eight acres) as a suitable site for burial provision to serve the growing local community. To facilitate access, additional land was purchased to create a short road connecting Park Road to the cemetery grounds, which continues to function as the main entrance today. The original development included fencing of the grounds, the construction of a chapel, and careful landscaping to create an orderly and respectful setting.



Figure 6.7: Newton Le Willows Cemetery (SHMBC)

6.2.15 The cemetery is notable for its collection of 19th and early 20th-century monuments and memorials, which reflect the social and industrial heritage of Newton-le-Willows. Many headstones commemorate individuals and families associated with the town’s key industries, such as railways, coal mining, and manufacturing, offering a tangible link to the borough’s history and community identity. This is noted as a source of pride for those in the area and attracts visitors from within the borough and further afield.

6.2.16 Since its opening, Newton-le-Willows Cemetery has been extended several times to

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accommodate the town's population growth. Additions have included a dedicated memorial garden for cremated remains and a garden of remembrance, providing spaces for quiet reflection and commemoration. Entrance to the cemetery was further enhanced in 1905 with the installation of new gates and landscaping improvements, which is a defining feature of the cemetery's character.

- 6.2.17 Today, Newton-le-Willows Cemetery continues to serve as an important place of remembrance for the community, embodying both historical significance and ongoing local identity within the wider St Helens borough.

6.3 Newton-le-Willows Cemetery Remaining Grave Space (March 2025)

- 6.3.1 The existing burial capacity identified within the Newton-le-Willows Cemetery is detailed in Table 6.2 below. Between 2006 and 2024/2025, the remaining burial spaces and number of spaces for cremation ashes and an approximate date when there will be no further capacity are outlined.
- 6.3.2 It should be noted that this study is again dependent on the figures listed in the table being reasonably accurate and is based on established data and formulas used elsewhere, including the recently approved extension to Knowsley Cemetery. If, at a later date, figures are found to be inaccurate by a significant amount, the findings should be reconsidered to address this.

**Table 6.2: Newton-le-Willows Cemetery Remaining Grave Space update March 2025
(SHMBC Completed 3/10/2025)**

	Total Burials 2006-2025	Remaining Plots	Forecast Capacity	Anticipated Date of capacity being met
Full Burials in New Graves	401	171	256 ¹¹ (513)	2036 (2033)
Cremated Remains Burials in New Graves	324	445	2,670	2051
Muslim Burial Spaces	0	0	0	0

- 6.3.3 Importantly, although no Muslim burials have taken place in this cemetery in recent years, SHMBC remains committed to reviewing and providing appropriate burial space should a need arise in the future.
- 6.3.4 Similar to St Helens Cemetery, it was confirmed that there are no current plans for expanding the cemetery to accommodate expected growth beyond 2036. However, land to the south of the current boundary has been identified that could be considered for a possible extension post 2036.
- 6.3.5 Newton le-Willows Cemetery covers an area of approximately 4.3ha. The cemetery is owned by the Council and is designated as open space and outdoor sports in the local plan.
- 6.3.6 Following a site visit conducted on the 14th of July 2025, several possible sites close to Newton-le-Willows Cemetery were explored, which could potentially provide for future expansion.

¹¹ The figure of 256 assumes an average of 1.5 burials per plot



Further detailed work will be required to explore this further to increase the existing provision within the area immediately adjoining the current cemetery grounds.

7.0 FORECAST MORTALITY IN ST HELENS BASED ON DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS (2021 CENSUS)

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 Within this section, the population trends within SHMB are examined, including historic population trends and future population forecasts. Based on the outcome, the mortality rate in SHMB is forecast.
- 7.1.2 The historic population trends, future population forecasts and mortality rates within the Borough, including an assessment of the different faith groups, are assessed. To understand the projected burial needs for the St Helens residents, a baseline of existing burial plots within St Helens burial sites, provided by St Helens Council, has been utilised. This has provided an estimated calculation of the surplus or deficit of burial spaces for each religion within the Borough for the period 2023-2043.
- 7.1.3 Office for National Statistics (ONS) data projects the population to 2043. The data within this section extends from 2021 (the last census data collection) to 2041. This will ensure all data is based on long-term trends and will enable the Council to plan both within and beyond the plan period.

7.2 Population Background

- 7.2.1 To properly plan for the future burial needs for St Helens, it's important to understand the relevant data. This includes analysing a range of data sources, including:
- Population change
 - Death rates
 - Estimates of future numbers of deaths
 - Religious demographics in the Borough

7.3 Regional Population

- 7.3.1 The population of Northwest England is 7,516,113 according to mid-2022 population figures published by the ONS. Northwest England's population growth rate between mid-2021 and mid-2022 was 1.2% per year. Northwest England covers an area of 14,107 square kilometres (5,447 square miles) and has a population density of 533 people per square kilometre (km²), based on the latest population estimates taken in mid-2022.
- 7.3.2 According to the latest 2021 census, the population in Northwest England is predominantly white (86%), with non-white minorities representing the remaining 14% of the population.
- 7.3.3 The 2021 census indicates that the most populous religious group within Northwest England is Christians, accounting for 52.5% of the population. Northwest England has a Muslim population of 563,105, which is 7.6% of the population. Compared to England as a whole, where circa 46% of the population is Christian, 7% is Muslim, 2% is Hindu, and Buddhists, Sikhs and Jews each is around 1%. The remainder is split between people with no religion and those who decided not to identify a religion.

7.4 Population in St. Helens

- 7.4.1 Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicates that the population of SHMB has increased by 4.5%, from around 175,300 in 2011 to 183,200 in 2021 (census). It is projected to rise to nearly 193,301 in 2032 and 202,856 by 2043¹². The main driver of the projected growth is net internal migration¹³. St. Helens' annual net international migration is, however, still relatively low, with a rate of 0.42%, which is below the English average of 0.9%
- 7.4.2 The borough's average age is increasing with an ever-growing ageing population. 37,320 people are aged 65 years and older (ONS, 2021). This represents almost 21% of the population in comparison to 18% of the population nationally. 2018-based subnational population projections show St Helens' 85+ population will almost double by 2043¹⁴.
- 7.4.3 St. Helens' birth rate of 10.1 births per thousand people is 0.4 lower than England's average birth rate¹⁵, and St. Helens' death rate or mortality rate of 11.9 people per thousand is 2.3 higher than England's average death rate.

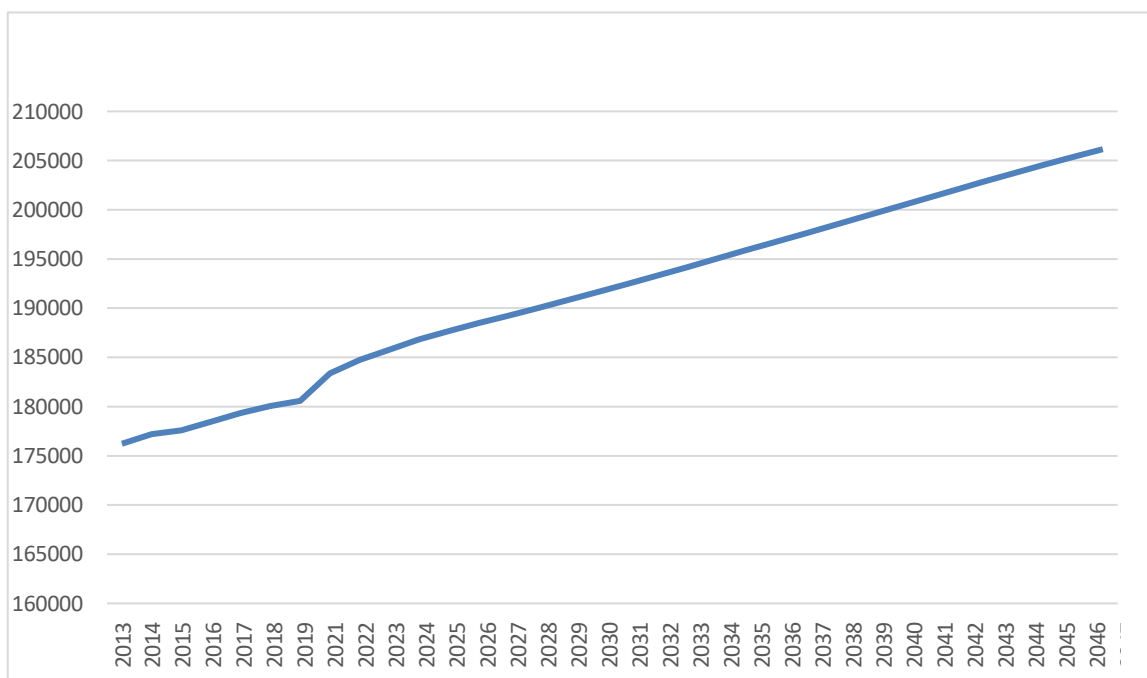


Figure 7.1: Population Change in St. Helens 2013-2047 (ONS)¹⁶

7.5 Ethnicity in St. Helens

- 7.5.1 The 2021 census indicated that the population in St. Helens is predominantly white (96.5%)¹⁷, with other ethnic groups representing the remaining 3.5% of the population. Asian people were the largest minority group in St. Helens, accounting for 1.4% of the population.
- 7.5.2 Additionally, 776 or 0.4% of the St. Helens population is black according to the latest 2021

¹² Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

¹³ Subnational population projections for England Migration category variant - Office for National Statistics

¹⁴ Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

¹⁵ St. Helens Population | Historic, forecast, migration

¹⁶ Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

¹⁷ Census - Office for National Statistics

census. In England more broadly, the portion of the population that is white is 81%. 10% are Asian, and 4% are Black.

Table 7.1: Population by race in St. Helens (Source: ONS,2021 census)

Race	Population	Population %
White	176,888	96.50%
Asian	2,579	1.4%
Mixed	1,971	1.1%
Other	1,034	0.4%
Black	776	0.4

7.6 Population of St. Helens by faith groups

7.6.1 The 2021 census identifies that the most populous religious group within St. Helens is Christians, accounting for 62.3% of the population. St. Helens has a Muslim population of 1,340, which is 0.7% of the population.

7.6.2 This compares to England as a whole, which is circa 46% Christian, 7% Muslim, 2% Hindu, and Buddhists, Sikhs and Jews each around 1%. The remainder is split between people with no religion and those who decided not to identify a specific religion.

Table 7.2: Population by faith group in St Helens Borough Council (Source: ONS,2021 census)

Religion	Population	Population %
Christian	114,201	62.3%
No religion	57,189	31.2%
Religion not stated	8655	4.7%
Muslim	1,340	0.7%
Hindu	597	0.3%
Buddhist	501	0.3%
Other	650	0.35%
Jewish	63	0.03%
Sikh	54	0.03%

7.6.3 More specifically, the 'Other' option for religion (650 people or 0.35%) includes the following:

- Alevi – 15 people
- Baha'I – 6 people
- Heathen – 17 people
- Pagan – 221 people
- Spiritual – 45 people
- Spiritualist – 89 people
- Wicca – 50 people

7.6.4 The changes between the 2011 census and the 2021 census show that:

- No religion increased to 31.2% (2021) from 14.6% (2011)
- Christian decreased to:62.03% (2021) from 78.8% (2011)
- Other religions all saw an increase except Sikh and Jewish, which remained consistent at 0.03%

7.6.5 Many factors can cause changes to the religious profile of an area, such as a changing age structure or residents relocating for work or education. Changes may also be caused by differences in the way individuals choose to self-identify between censuses. Religious affiliation is the religion to which someone connects or identifies, rather than their beliefs or religious practice.

Table 7.3: Makeup of Borough of St. Helens by religion and % annual difference (Source: ONS 2011-2021 Census)

Religion	% of population in the Borough		Difference in % 2011 – 2021	% increase/ decrease p/a	The difference in % between England and St. Helens (2021)
	2011	2021			
Christian	78.8%	62.3%	-16.5%	-1.65%	-16.1%
Buddhist	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.01%	0.2%
Hindu	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.01%	1.4%
Jewish	0.1%	0.03%	-0.07%	-0.007%	0.47%
Muslim	0.3%	0.7%	0.4%	0.04%	5.8%
Sikh	0.01%	0.03%	0.02%	0.002%	0.87%
Other religion	0.2%	0.35%	0.15%	0.02%	0.25%
No religion	14.6%	31.2%	16.6%	0.17%	5.95%
Religion not stated	5.5%	4.7%	0.8%	0.08%	1.3%

7.7 Forecasting the percentage of different religions

7.7.1 Census projections are not undertaken for religion, so there is no nationally available data on the expected number of people of different religions in the future. This study has assessed the available data from the 2011 and 2021 Censuses (for both St. Helens and England).

7.7.2 The most recent ONS data available for St. Helens is variable on an annual basis, making it difficult to establish clear trends for some religions. However, given that it provides specific data for St. Helens, these data sets are currently the most reliable for forecasting the future percentage changes of different religious groups.

7.7.3 Although the diversity and subsequent religious diversity of SHMB's population are not statistically significant, at present, the Council will still need to consider the religious and cultural practices of all of its residents when making decisions about community services and facilities. In estimating the demand for burial space, it is necessary to consider the specific requirements of different religions when planning new cemeteries or burial grounds.

7.7.4 In 2021, St. Helens was among the top 40% most densely populated English local authority areas at the last census, and this was an increase since the last census. To try and contextualise this, the borough was home to around 9.6 people per football pitch-sized piece of land, compared with 9.2 in 2011¹⁸.

7.7.5 The median average age in St. Helens in 2022 was 42.9, with people of working age (ages 16-64) representing 61.6% of the population. The sex ratio was 96.4 males to every 100 females

7.8 Predicted Population Changes in St Helens

7.8.1 It is forecast that the median age in St. Helens is projected to rise from 42 years in 2022 to 43 years in 2032. In 2032, 21% of the population in St. Helens is projected to be aged 65 years or over, up from 19% in 2022. The 50 to 59 age group are set to see the largest change in St. Helens between 2022 and 2032, and the 85+ population will almost double by 2043, while the young people are forecast to remain mostly static.

¹⁸ St. Helens population change, Census 2021 – ONS

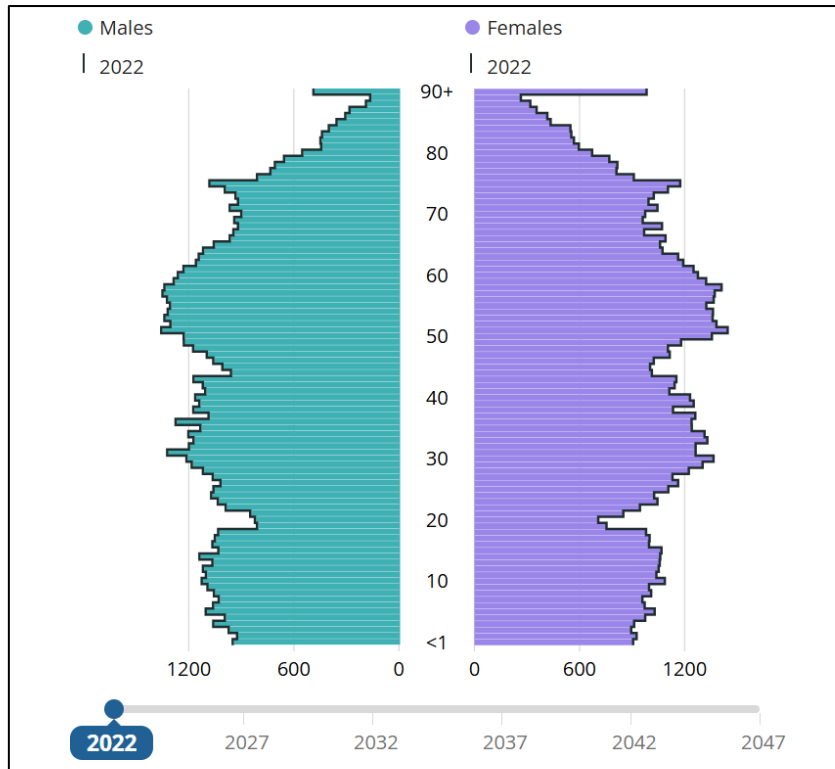


Figure 7.2 Population Projections by Broad Age Band 2022 (Source: ONS¹⁹)

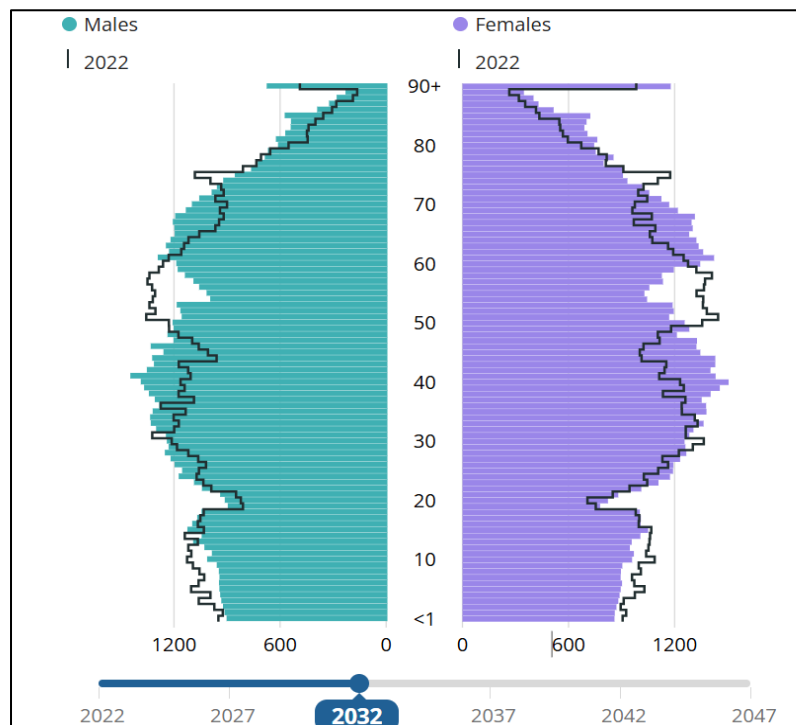


Figure 7.3 Population Projections by Broad Age Band 2032 (Source: ONS²⁰)

¹⁹ Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

²⁰ Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

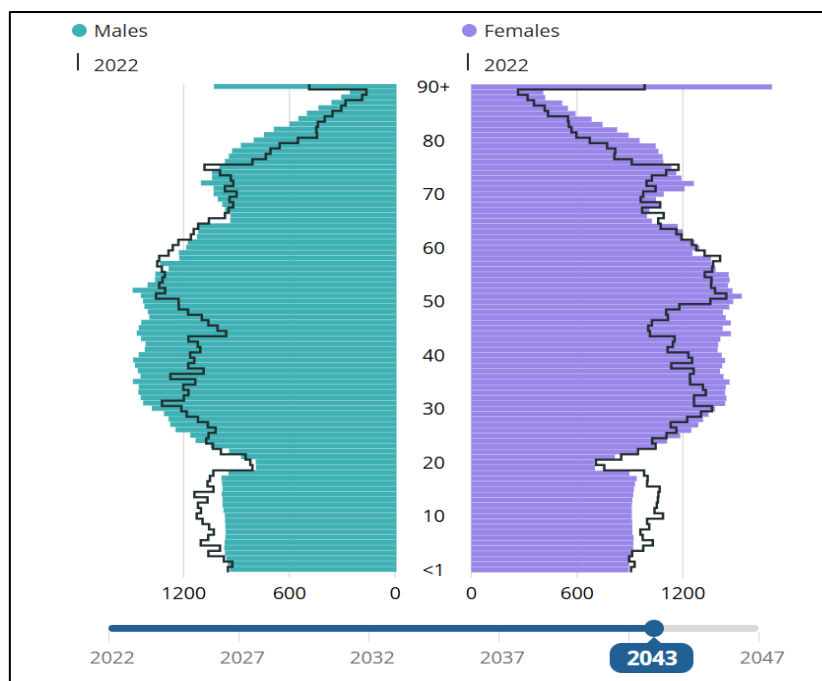


Figure 7.4 Population Projections by Broad Age Band 2043 (Source: ONS²¹)

7.9 Life expectancy in St. Helens

- 7.9.1 ONS figures show the life expectancy of someone born in St. Helens is 79 years. Split by gender, a female born in St. Helens has a life expectancy of 81 years, and a male has a life expectancy of 78 years.
- 7.9.2 As a comparison, in England as a whole, current life expectancy at birth is 81 years, for females that rises to 83 years, and for males it falls to 79 years.
- 7.9.3 The life expectancy for someone born in St. Helens has risen by 2 years over the past decade, from a life expectancy of 77 years to a life expectancy of 79 years. In England as a whole, life expectancies have risen by 3 years.

7.10 Mortality in the Borough

- 7.10.1 The current death rate recorded for St. Helens has remained relatively stable from 2022 to 2024 (Figure 7.5).

²¹ Subnational population projections for England - Office for National Statistics

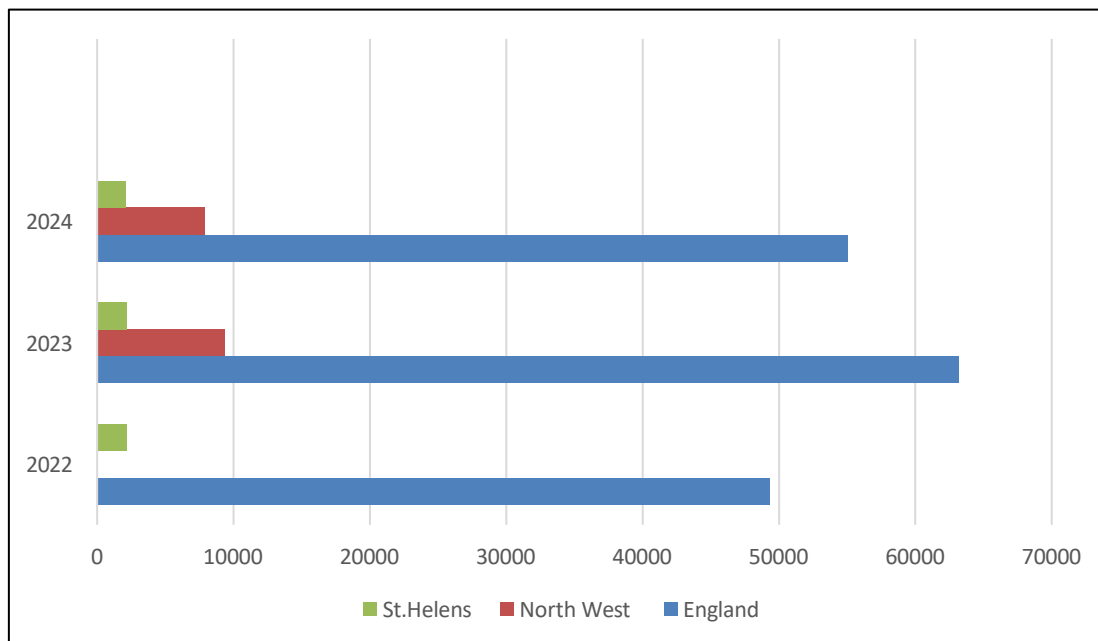


Figure 7.5 Total Deaths Per Annum for England, Northwest and St. Helens – 2022-2024 (Source: ONS²²)

- 7.10.2 A review of the relationship between mortality rate and year, and mortality rate and population size shows that mortality rate has decreased between 1993 and 2015, as the population has increased.
- 7.10.3 The most common causes of death in St. Helens are cancer (26%) and circulatory diseases (24%), and rates of death under age 75 have increased annually in St Helens since 2018.
- 7.10.4 Natural change is the balance between births and deaths. Since 2011, there have been 17,831 births and 17,529 deaths in St Helens, a net of +572.
- 7.10.5 There is also significant inequality in life expectancy: A 12.3-year gap for males and an 8.5-year gap for females exists between the borough's highest (Eccleston) and lowest (Parr) wards based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation²³.

7.11 Deaths per religion

- 7.11.1 There is no published data for forecasting deaths by religions, however based on the information set out above and the published census and population data, indicating the percentage of residents by religion in St. Helens, it has been possible to produce an estimate of deaths for each religion given the known death rate for 2011 and 2021 as recorded in the Census (Table 7.4). This has considered the change in population over time and the change in the ratio of different religions.
- 7.11.2 The forecast number of deaths per year for each religion can be approximately calculated on an annual basis (2021-2038), and also the cumulative deaths for each year in St. Helens, assuming the same percentage increase or decrease each year to calculate an estimated number.

²² ONS information, deaths 1993-2015

²³ Indices of Deprivation 2019 Summary Report

Table 7.4: Estimated Forecast deaths per religion (Source: ONS/Enzygo)

Religion	Population	Population %	Annual deaths 2021	Estimated Cumulative Deaths Forecast 2021-2038
Christian	114,201	62.3%	761	9,730
No religion	57,189	31.2%	381	4,953
Religion not stated	8655	4.7%	57	742
Muslim	1,340	0.7%	9	117
Hindu	597	0.3%	4	52
Buddhist	501	0.3%	4	52
Other	650	0.35%	4	52
Jewish	63	0.03%	1	13
Sikh	54	0.03%	1	13

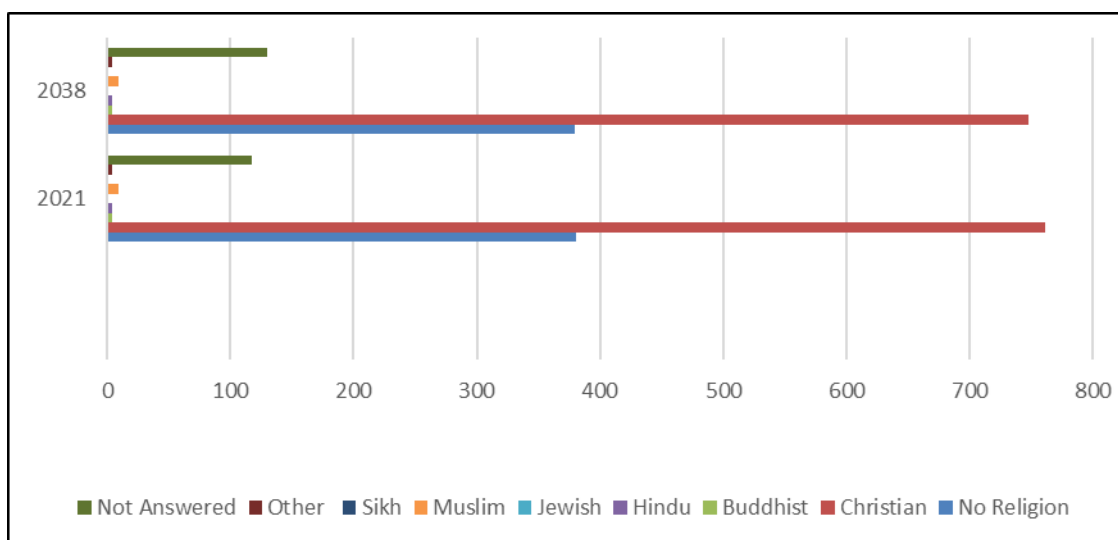


Figure 7.6: Deaths per religion 2021 and forecast to 2038 (Source: ONS/Enzygo)

7.11.3 From the year 2021-2038, it is anticipated that a combined total number of 20,521 deaths will occur in St. Helens, set out in Table 7.4 and Figure 7.6, which highlight the recorded deaths by religion in 2021 and forecast in 2038²⁴.

²⁴ ONS 2021 Census

8.0 THE NEED FOR FUTURE BURIAL PROVISION

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 It is important not to make assumptions about a resident's preferences in relation to their preferred burial customs and practices based on their stated religion. Someone who identifies with a particular religion may not necessarily want a funeral that incorporates the cultural traditions of that religion.

8.2 Population of St Helens by religion

8.2.1 At present, there is no published data in St. Helens to show how different faith groups have varying preferences for whether they choose to be buried. In the absence of an audit within St. Helens, to assist in identifying the need within the Borough, we have used the Greater London Audit data from 2011, which provides a percentage burial rate per religion. It indicates that Muslim and Jewish faith groups have the highest percentage of people requiring burial, at 99% and 96% respectively.

8.3 Burial and Cremation requirements

- 8.3.1 Within England and Wales, the cremation rate has increased steadily since the war, and it is assumed that there will not be a significant increase or decrease in the percentage of the population being cremated. The current national rate of approximately 73% of the population being cremated has been used for this study, except for religions with specific requirements.
- 8.3.2 To help understand the projected need for burials amongst the different religions, a baseline of existing burial plots within St. Helens, provided by St. Helens Council, has been utilised in Chapter 6. This has provided an estimated calculation of the surplus or deficit of burial spaces for each religion within the Borough for the period 2021-2038.

Table 8.1: Faiths Requiring Burial (Source: ONS Enzygo)

Religion	Cumulative deaths Forecast 2021-2038	% Choosing Burial	Average number to be buried per year	Total Number of Burials ²⁴
Christian	9,730	27	154.5	2,627
Buddhist	52	91	2.76	47
Hindu	52	10	0.3	5
Jewish	13	96	0.8	13
Muslim	117	99	6.8	116
Sikh	13	16	0.1	2
Other	52	68	2.05	35
No Religion	381	30	8.47	113
Not Stated in Census	761	30	13.41	228
Total	11,171		189.19	3,186

Table 8.2: Faiths Requiring Cremation (Source: ONS Enzygo)

Religion	Cumulative deaths Forecast 2021-2038	% Choosing Cremation	Average number to be cremated per year	Total Number of Cremations ²⁵
Christian	9,730	73	417.8	7,103
Buddhist	52	9	0.3	5
Hindu	52	90	3.0	47
Jewish	13	4	0.05	1
Muslim	117	1	0.10	2
Sikh	13	84	0.65	11
Other	52	32	1.0	17
No Religion	381	70	15.65	266
Not Stated in Census	761	70	31.36	533
Total	11,171		469.91	7,985

(Assuming 70% cremation/30% burial - No Religion = 266 cremations and 113 burials. Not stated in the census = 533 cremations and 228 burials)

8.4 Summary of Supply and Demand

- 8.4.1 Making use of the best available data and given the percentage of faiths choosing burials set out above, Table 8.1 shows that it is estimated that a cumulative number of **3,186** burials will be required. This equates to approximately **189** per year. Most of these burials (**2,627**) are predicted to be Christian burials.
- 8.4.2 Based on this figure, there is a requirement for approximately **63** plots per year for burial (based on 3 per plot).
- 8.4.3 In terms of cremation, based on the forecasted mortality rate, Table 8.2 shows that approximately **470** cremations are expected per year, and an accumulation of **7,985**. It is estimated that approximately 30% of cremation ashes are interred²⁶. Based on this figure, there is a requirement for approximately **23** spaces per year for cremation ashes (based on 6 per plot).
- 8.4.4 The next largest faith group is predicted to be Islam. In Islam, after death, the body is prepared for burial, which should happen as soon as possible after death. Similarly, for the Jewish faith, funerals should be held as quickly as possible, often within 24 hours. Both faiths will usually require virgin burial land. While there is no definitive definition of virgin land, it is generally considered to be land that has not been significantly disturbed by human activity.
- 8.4.5 Although for Buddhists cremation is common, burial may also be practised depending on the cultural and regional traditions of the community. This would also be the case for the Christians, Hindus and Sikhs who may also choose burials.
- 8.4.6 Whilst we suggest that consideration should be given to future opportunities to reuse existing graves, intensify existing cemeteries and extend existing cemeteries where feasible, as we have stated previously, the current position of the Council is not to follow this option.

²⁵ discrepancy due to rounding

²⁶ https://www.cemeteryresearch.org/faqs/how-many-people-are-cremated-and-how-many-buried/?back_url&back_title=Back

8.5 Supply of Land

- 8.5.1 To investigate the provision of new sites, the Environment Agency stipulates a limit of no more than **2,500** graves per hectare, and we have assumed **1,976** graves per hectare due to the size and layout of the existing cemeteries within SHMBC²⁷. In terms of cremations, the figure provided by the Cremation Society **3,000** cremations can be accommodated per hectare²⁸.
- 8.5.2 In line with the projected estimates of population growth, the forecast deaths as set out above, growth of different religious communities and percentages choosing burial per religion, to accommodate all estimated burials from the period 2021-2038, approximately **1.0 hectare** of land will be required.
- 8.5.3 If the annual burial and cremation figures set out above in Tables 8.1 and Table 8.2 provide a baseline and are forecast to 2050 and 2100, the following requirements have been identified.
- 8.5.4 Using approximately **190** burials per year, there will be a further **2,280** burials by 2050 and **11,780** by 2100. In terms of cremations, assuming **470** cremations per year, there will be a further **5,640** cremations by 2050 and **29,140** by 2100. This means that approximately **1.15 hectares** by 2050 and **5.96 hectares** by 2100 will be required for new burials. In respect of cremations using the assumption of **3,000 per hectare**, the requirement will be **1.88 hectares** by 2050 and **9.71 hectares** by 2100. This gives a total requirement of **3.03 hectares by 2050** and **15.67 hectares by 2100** for future provision in St Helens Metropolitan Borough.
- 8.5.5 To identify whether St. Helens has enough existing burial space to meet this potential need, further work will be required to examine potential options, including the re-use of existing graves. Clearly, some burials and cremations will be carried out at facilities in other local authority areas, in particular the Knowsley Cemetery Extension at Whiston and private facilities such as Green Acres to the north of the Borough.

²⁷ Environment Agency Low environmental risk cemeteries: exemption conditions Oct.2023

²⁸ <https://www.cremation.org.uk/statistics>

9.0 OPTION IDENTIFICATION AND POTENTIAL

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Within this Chapter, the options which could accommodate the estimated burial capacity requirements identified are detailed.

9.2 Options Identification

9.2.1 Several options that could accommodate the identified capacity have been considered:

9.2.2 An initial review of each of the five options set out in Table 9.1 has been undertaken to assess their viability and consider whether these options should be taken forward. In reality, each option does not necessarily have to be undertaken in isolation, and a combined approach incorporating a number of options could be the preferred option.

Table 9.1: Options to meet the need

Option	Potential to meet need	Next stage
Intensification	<p>This approach can be beneficial when the number of additional spaces required is small and the sites have not been used intensively in the past.</p> <p>St Helens MBC have previously identified all available space within both the St Helens and the NLW Cemeteries and plans to utilise this over the coming years.</p>	Consider the available capacity within existing cemeteries, as provided by the council, to determine the projected timeline for when the current provision is likely to be fully utilised.
Extensions	<p>This option may be feasible in some locations and could provide a variable number of additional plots, depending on the size and nature of any extension. The potential for site extensions must be assessed individually, taking into account a range of factors, including physical constraints and potential environmental impacts.</p> <p>The Council has advised Enzygo that where extensions have been practicable, they have already been implemented- for example, St Helens Cemetery and Crematorium, which was extended in 2010. Opportunities for extending the Newton-le-Willow Cemetery are more limited due to policy restrictions, existing housing allocations, and environmental constraints.</p>	Incorporate existing extensions into the future needs analysis.
New sites	This approach will involve calculating when the current public grave capacity will run out and how much space will be needed to accommodate future burial requirements.	Identify and consider new sites, with particular attention to the areas of St Helens town and NLW.

Option	Potential to meet need	Next stage
Joint working	<p>Would require working closely with surrounding LAs to ensure demand could be met elsewhere. However, most families prefer the opportunity to be buried within their local area, so this option could be unpopular with residents.</p> <p>In addition, surrounding LAs are likely to face their own challenges in terms of meeting burial needs, and therefore, this option could be challenging.</p>	<p>As St Helens Metropolitan Borough currently has sufficient capacity within its own cemeteries to meet future burial needs up to 2040, formal, joint working with neighbouring authorities is not considered necessary at this time. Nevertheless, in accordance with the duty to cooperate, the Council remains open to collaborative arrangements in the future should the need/opportunity arise.</p>
Do nothing	<p>Would rely upon independent planning applications coming forward. This would not be a planned approach to meet the future burial demand.</p>	<p>Option not taken forward.</p>

10.0 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

10.1 Conclusions

10.1.1 This Burial Needs Assessment provides an evaluation of the current and future burial provision within the Borough of St Helens up to 2040. The assessment period to 2040 has been selected as it aligns with the available census data projections and the anticipated point at which existing burial capacity in St Helens is expected to be reached. The study has:

- **Assessed current capacity** across public and private cemeteries, identifying that while St Helens Cemetery has sufficient burial capacity until approximately 2040, Newton-le-Willows Cemetery is expected to reach capacity by 2036.
- **Forecasted future demand** based on demographic trends, mortality rates, and religious requirements, highlighting a cumulative need for approximately **3,186 burials** and **7,985 cremations** between 2021 and 2038.
- **Identified a shortfall in provision beyond 2040**, for specific faith groups requiring virgin burial land (e.g., Muslim and Jewish communities).
- **Evaluated options** including future capacity, extensions, and new sites, concluding that proactive planning for new cemetery sites is essential to maintain dignified, accessible provision.
- **Highlighted viable new sites** capable of delivering long-term capacity, subject to technical feasibility and planning considerations.

10.1.2 The headline findings from the assessments are that while short-term needs may be met through existing provision and limited extensions, long-term burial needs will require proactive planning and although there is capacity at the Knowsley Cemetery Extension and the private facility at Greenacres, there will be a future need to deliver new cemetery sites

10.1.3 The Council should ideally identify Council-owned land and consider policy mechanisms in the emerging Local Plan to safeguard suitable land for future burial use. This could include specific housing sites having a policy requirement to deliver a certain-sized cemetery within or close to the site layout/allocation

10.1.4 Within this report, the existing capacity for the interment of ashes is considered, along with future requirements. This takes into account the existing and future faith groups within the Borough, and their specific requirements in terms of interment.

10.1.5 This report has identified that there are sufficient burial plots at St. Helens Cemetery providing a capacity until 2040. Space for burial of cremated remains is limited, with plots being released as and when required. At Newton-le-Willows, the situation is more immediate, with **171** remaining burial plots providing potential capacity only until 2036. This is further exacerbated post 2038 (end of the Local Plan period) with the need within St Helens for an extra **2,280 burials by 2050** and **11,780 by 2100**. In terms of cremations, assuming 470 cremations per year, there will be a further **5,640 cremations by 2050** and **29,140 by 2100**.

10.1.6 This means that approximately **1.15 hectares by 2050** and **5.96 hectares by 2100** will be required for new burials. In respect of cremations using the assumption of **3,000 per hectare**, the

requirement will be **1.88 hectares by 2050** and **9.71 hectares by 2100**. This gives a total requirement of 3.03 hectares by 2050 and 15.67 hectares by 2100 for future provision in SHMB.

10.1.7 Further investigations will be required to confirm if future sites identified are appropriate for a cemetery extension. This should include relevant technical assessments, including:

- Geo-technical ground investigation
- Hydrology
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Ecology
- Arboriculture
- Transport

10.2 Next Steps

10.2.1 The assessment has identified potential extension of both existing cemeteries at St. Helens and Newton-le-Willows. As St Helens Cemetery has recently been extended (2010), it is understood that a further extension is not currently being considered.

10.2.2 Further investigations would be required to establish if any future sites are feasible. If extensions to existing sites are shown not to be feasible, for example, through further investigation, such as hydrological considerations, there will be a requirement for the Council to identify an alternative site for cemetery use. This report sets out factors that should be considered when reviewing new sites for their suitability for burial provision.

10.2.3 To ensure the findings and recommendations of this Burial Needs Assessment are effectively implemented, the following steps are proposed:

- Technical Feasibility Assessments
- Policy Integration
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Funding Strategy
- Monitoring and Review
- Site Allocation and Master Planning

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Arboricultural Impact Assessments
Tree Surveys and Tree Constraints Plans
Tree and Woodland Management Plans

Air Quality

Air Quality Assessments and Monitoring
Dust Assessment and Management Plans
Odour Assessment and Management Plans

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