



CONGLETON CEMETERY

MANAGEMENT PLAN

2026 - 2036

Version 1.0

Status: **Draft** | Approved: **TBD** | Review: February 2026

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CHANGE LOG & VERSION CONTROL

This document is subject to a rolling annual review with key amendments approved through current schemes of delegation linked subordinated from the Head of Environmental Services.

Version	Approval date	Author	Description
v1.0		P.Brightwell	Initial release of the Management Plan

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to this plan

Congleton Cemetery has been operating since May 2004 and provides a place for local burial and remembrance.

This management plan outlines the council's current strategy for the management of its bereavement services at Congleton Cemetery factoring the councils corporate aims as outlined in the current Cemeteries Strategy as adopted in April of 2024. This management plans reflects the aims of the strategy to offer a management vision of bereavement services in the short, medium, and longer term in Cheshire East. The current Cemeteries Strategy as adopted in February 2024 can be seen here:

[Cemetery and crematoria rules](#)

This plan outlines the current baseline position of the cemetery portfolio and highlights a number of recommendations to be implemented over the series of timescales outlined in the councils adopted Cemeteries strategy.

The proposals contained within this Management plan are summarised in this format to offer a prioritised investment matrix that is aligned with the council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS).

This process ensures sustainable management practices that deliver a quality customer experience for the benefit of the local communities who engage with the council's bereavement services.

2. Site description / general overview

Congleton Cemetery is situated on Howey Lane in Congleton and covers approximately 3.18 acres. The cemetery is inter-denominational and provides lawn graves, a children's section and a terraced garden for cremated remains. Access to the site at its northern most point is via Howey Lane and is the single access point to the site.

The cemetery has an open appearance owing to the predominance of the southern extent that is allocated as an area of lawn graves assigned for traditional burials. The central area adjoining of the site consist of terraced ashes garden feature with an adjoining Children's burial section. To the north adjoining the site entrance is a site office and visitor parking area.

The site adjoins the older St Peters churchyard to the north that does not form part of the councils estate and is bordered in its entirety by semi mature hedgerows with sporadic deciduous tree planting. The site is secured with a mixture of hedgerow along with post and rail fencing around the majority of its perimeter, with more formal wrought iron spear top fencing around the site entrance gates.

The site is bordered along its eastern flank by an open expanse of grassland, with housing development along the southern and western boundaries.

The site has partial development of the proposed internal road network which currently extends from the site entrance and car parking complex south into the central portion of the site in accordance with the sites development Masterplan.

This roadway network is currently incomplete and subject to continuation to allow vehicular access to plot areas in the southern portion of the site that are to be used for further formal burials as the lawn grave area is extended.

At the north of the cemetery adjoining the site entrance is an office and car parking area that includes approximately ten parking spaces for visitors, with two bays for staff and three marked disabled parking bays. Vehicular access to members of the public is restricted beyond this point by the use of moveable traffic bollards.

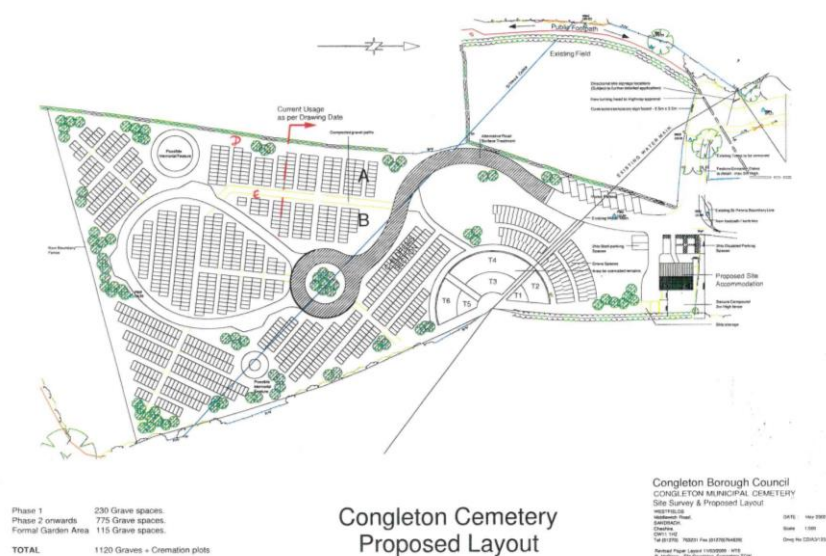
Mature tree planting is present around the perimeter and are periodically monitored as part of the councils Tree Risk Management Strategy (TRMS) to ensure they remain in generally good health in an effort to minimise the risk of personal injury. The tree planting is comprised of a mixture of deciduous species that enhance the biodiversity value of the site.

No trees are covered by tree preservation orders nor is the site within a conservation area.

The cemetery is currently broadly divided into three distinct sections that include the Terraced gardens for cremated remains, the Children's section and the lawn grave sections for conventional burials. The site Masterplan proposes that the site will ultimately be partitioned into approximately fifteen distinct sections as the site undergoes further development as burials and ashes interments progress.

The current sections are separated by a mixture of tarmac and compacted gravel pathways to allow pedestrian access to the burial and interment areas, with roadway access partitioned with moveable bollards to allow restrictive access for site staff to the operational areas.

Fig 1: Site Masterplan - proposed plot orientation & core site features



3. Summary of residual capacity

3.1 Current Provision

The site is currently assumed to have approximately 85% remaining burial capacity that would take any consideration of the fill date beyond the analysis period for the purpose of this Management plan.

A portion of the lawn grave area has been developed on the sites internal northerly facing flank along the western boundary. This area is estimated that to have utilised approximately 15% of the proposed grave capacity, with an assumed 50% of the allocated Children's grave plot capacity utilised to date.

Fig 2. Current extent of plot and remembrance area utilisation



Ground conditions across the lawn grave area were heavily saturated at the time of visiting (*January 2025*). Anecdotal reports suggest the presence of historic field drains in this area, which may explain the current drainage issues.

Any derelict or damaged drains that are contributing to the poor drainage in this area would benefit from remediation to prevent operational complications in the future.

Plate 1. Current extent of lawn grave area utilisation



3.2 Future expansion / utilisation

The site Masterplan indicates further available plot capacity for the current lawn grave area and utilisation of the land beyond the extent of the current series of grave plots will require installation of the next phase of the roadway network that will provide operational access as the current grave plot area is extended eastwards.

Current drainage issues will need resolving to address excessive ground water saturation that is present throughout the lawn grave area. Anecdotal reports suggest the presence of field drains in this area that are suspected to have fallen into a state of disrepair.

The failure of any historic drainage infrastructure would explain the observed saturation of the Lawn grave section in conjunction with the heavy clay soil material that is being disturbed at the toe of the internal flank as the grave plots are utilised that could further restrict watershed.

The saturated ground presents difficulties in terms of operational access and can incur additional operating cost to pump accumulated ground water from freshly excavated grave plots.

3.3 Lawn grave area - Recommendations

Future plot utilisation within the lawn grave areas is contingent on resolution of current ground water saturation issues along with further expansion of the road network to provide operational access.

The ground in this area is comprised of a heavy clay soil structure which in of itself has the potential to impede drainage.

At the time of visiting (Jan 2025), the southerly extent of the site on the large internal northerly facing flank, the ground was heavily saturated. Anecdotal reports suggest the presence of field drains in this area that are assumed would have discharged on the sites western flank coinciding with the area where the current phase of grave plot utilisation has commenced. Ground investigation of this area is recommended in lieu of any supporting evidence for drainage infrastructure in this area

Plate 2. Heavy clay soil type with observable water logging



3.4 Terraced Memorial Garden area - Recommendations

The terraced Memorial Garden section is nearing capacity suggesting the need to either consider expansion of the terracing further up the flank or for the transition to an alternative form of memorialisation elsewhere onsite.

Possible alternatives to extend the offer for a communal ashes memorialisation feature at Congleton Cemetery could include allocation of further ashes plots onsite, or for a sustainable ashes plot that could perpetuate site capacity beyond that to be expected for traditional singular ashes interment plots.

4.0 Baseline conditioning report

Built Infrastructure

4.1 Site offices

The office building opposite the site entrance gates is in good order with no observable or logged maintenance issues. The building contains a roller shuttered garage unit and has a wrought iron fenced compound area at the rear that are currently used for storage of materials and equipment by the operational site staff.

Plate 3. Site office complex and site entrance gates



4.2 Site chapels

Not applicable for Congleton Cemetery.

4.3 Crematoriums

Not applicable for Congleton Cemetery.

Peripheral Infrastructure

4.4 Access to the cemetery and perimeter fencing

The site is accessed through a large ornamental wrought iron gate located on Howey Lane, which is permanently left open. The gates inclusive of hinges and gate posts appeared in overall good condition and appearance.

Plates 4 & 5. Ornamental site gates inclusive of pedestrian access gate.

4.5 Site access - Recommendations

The gates should be subject to routine maintenance to ensure the hinges remain unseized and in good working order.

The gates would benefit from being cleansed and potentially repainted to ensure a professional and welcome appearance to the cemetery.

4.6 Perimeter fencing



Most of the site perimeter is ringed by an aging wooden post and rail fencing which in places has fallen into a state of dilapidation and is in need of repair.

One such damaged section runs alongside the site access road beyond the visitor car park and represents a poor optic for site users. It is unclear if the posts were disturbed by the recent earthworks in the adjoining housing development site.

Plate 6. Example section of dilapidated post and rail fencing



4.7 Perimeter fencing - Recommendations

Damaged sections of fencing are to be repaired using the same pressure treated softwood stakes and pales that were used in the original construction. Damaged materials are to be removed from site.

The remainder of the fence should be monitored for any further signs of deterioration.

4.8 Pathways & Kerb edges

The existing tarmac pathways linking the terraced garden and the Lawn grave area are currently in good condition. The kerb edges show localised signs of damage in places that is assumed to be caused by vehicular contact.

4.9 Pathways & Kerb edges - Recommendations

There was limited evidence of cracking in places that should be monitored for further signs of deterioration with a cursory sum assigned for routine patchworks repairs as required to limit the potential for the damaged sections to present a trip hazard.

The kerb edges warrant monitoring with an allocated budget allowing for periodic ad-hoc repairs to limit the potential for trip hazards and to preserve the aesthetic of the pathway network.

4.10 Site signage

Signage is limited within the cemetery and only installed where considered necessary to convey helpful information and to enhance the visitor user experience.

The site has a large decorative information sign at the cemetery entrance which features a plan of the initial site phasing and provides updated contact information

for the council's Bereavement Services team and outlines key site-specific details for cemetery users.

Secondary way marking signage is also present to guide visitors to parking area and to advise of vehicular access restrictions to members of the public along with the cemetery speed limit.

Plates 7 & 8: Site entrance signage & guidance for visitor parking.



4.11 Site signage – Recommendations

The current main site welcome sign has been in place for some time and pre-dates the formation of the current unitary authority. The sign contains obsolete information and has previously had the contact information section covered over to remove references to the former management by the Town council.

In the interest of uniformity and ensuring the entrance complex offers a professional appearance a replacement sign is proposed that contains the correct information to include updated contact details and logos that reflect the current transition of the Orbitas organisation back into the council.

5. Capital Investment Plan

The capital works proposals outlined above are presented in the table below with the assumed timescales detailed for the spend allocation. Works are prioritised via a hierarchical urgency of need to factor aspects to include Health and Safety alongside commercial aspects that factor capacity and other operational considerations as outlined in the Design Guide.

Figure 3: Congleton Capital Investment plan

Item	Timescale	Spend category	Budget Estimate	Comments
Replace site signage	1 to 2	Commercial / Operational		
Drainage > field drain survey	1 to 2	Commercial / capacity		
Drainage > repairs / rerouting field drains	2 to 4	Commercial / capacity		
Pathway & kerb edging repairs	5 to 10	H&S		
Terraced Ashes plots - design consultancy	1 to 2	Commercial / capacity		
Terraced Ashes plots - expansion / niche walls	2 to 4	Commercial / capacity		
Repaint of site gates	2 to 4	Commercial / Aesthetic		
Drainage clearance / jetting	2 to 4	Commercial / Operational		
Fence repairs adjoining car park	1 to 2	Security / Aesthetics		
Implementation of additional access roads per site scheme	2 to 4	Commercial / capacity		

6. Landscape Maintenance

6.1 Grounds Maintenance

The site is managed in accordance with our Green Spaces Maintenance Standards Policy as approved by the environment and communities committee in February 2024, following a public consultation held in autumn 2023.

The policy came into effect in April 2024 and provides a framework for how the councils green spaces across Cheshire East are managed to include parks, sports playing fields and cemeteries.

All Council managed green spaces are divided into a series of typologies based on the type of site and it's primary function. Subject to the size and features included, each of these typologies could be further broken down on a zonal basis with maintenance standards then being set according to each zone amenity standard. These standards are based on a set range of annual maintenance tasks.

For cemeteries the outline recommendations from the landscape maintenance typology suggest that Congleton Cemetery will be subject to the following management regime.

Figure 4 Landscape maintenance typology for cemetery sites

Typology – Cemeteries, Church Yards & Memorials

Zoned Tasks	Zone	Definition	When	General Standard
Grass Cutting	2 Medium amenity	Accessible grassed areas within churchyards including grass pathways	Mar - Oct	Grass cut 8 times throughout the growing season
	3 low amenity	Areas with long grass and areas identified as biodiversity enhancement including grazed areas	Mar - Oct	Up to 3 cuts during the growing season. Areas are cut less frequent through growing season
Hedges	3 low amenity	Frontage hedges adjacent footpaths and access roads and internal hedges	Oct - Mar	1 cut per calendar year. Tractor and flail where accessible otherwise by hand
Hard surfaces	3 Low amenity	Car parks and access footpaths / highways	Apr - Oct	1 visit for weed treatment and leaf blowing in autumn.

6.2 Extent of landscape maintenance

Congleton Cemetery consists of a large expanse of grassland within the unutilised area of the Lawn Grave plots, with the remaining grassland areas located within the extent of the utilised plots. These areas are shown by the green highlighting in Figure 5 below.

There are a small number of shrub beds onsite which are shown with the purple highlighting in Figure 5 below.

Fig 5: Extent of current landscape maintenance areas



6.3 Arboriculture maintenance & Tree Risk Management

Trees onsite are managed in accordance with the Council Tree Risk Management Strategy whereby we a programme of routine inspections works are undertaken for the trees we own, but this excludes any routine maintenance.

All works are carried out on the basis of balancing overall risk to public safety from trees against the benefits of trees and the costs of work.

At Congleton cemetery there is semi mature deciduous planting located around the sites perimeter and in one of the shrub planting beds. These trees are managed and monitored in accordance with the councils Tree Risk Management Strategy.