

Discover what's beneath

C  
D  
S

## Statement of Community Involvement for East Cambridgeshire District Council Bereavement Facility Proposals

**Address: Former Mepal Outdoor Centre, Chatteris Road, Mepal, Ely, CB6 2AZ**

**Date: August 2021**

The CDS Group, Building 51, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Bedfordshire, MK45 4HS

W: [www.thecdsgroup.co.uk](http://www.thecdsgroup.co.uk)

T: 01525 864387

E: [info@thecdsgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@thecdsgroup.co.uk)



## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction and Site Location .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Background and Community Involvement Schedule .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Community Involvement Process .....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	Funeral Director Survey October/November 2018.....	5
3.2	Extraordinary (Special Full Council) ECDC Meeting – July 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2020.....	5
3.3	Presentation to Mepal Parish Council – September 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2020.....	6
3.4	Public Consultation – January 2021 .....	6
3.4.1	Public Consultation Results.....	6
3.4.2	Public Consultation Analysis .....	23
<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>28</b>

---

## 1 Introduction and Site Location

East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) are proposing the development of a crematorium with natural burials, memorial and remembrance space, modular function building, and car parking. The aim of the project is to provide an essential bereavement service to accommodate the needs of the community in the East Cambridgeshire District. The purpose of this report is to outline the community involvement that has been involved in this project and how it has evolved.

This report has been produced by The CDS Group for the proposed crematorium and natural burial bereavement facility at Mepal. The proposed site is outlined in red on the map below: Former Mepal Outdoor Centre, Chatteris Road, Mepal, Ely, CB6 2AZ.



**Figure 1. Aerial map of the site (boundary indicated in red)**

In Appendix 3, page 348 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted 2015), the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is defined as a ‘document setting out how and when stakeholders and other interested parties will be consulted and involved in the preparation of the LDF (and the consideration of individual planning applications)’.

## 2 Background and Community Involvement Schedule

Following financial difficulties and an arson attack at the former outdoor centre in December 2016, ECDC set up a Working Party to explore the future of the site. They invited organisations to register their interest in the site twice; a potential provider was found who intended to retain the site's existing use, however in November 2019 it was reported to the Finance and Assets Committee of the Council that the preferred bidder had decided not to progress with their bid.

Therefore, Officers at ECDC formulated plans on alternative use options for the site. One of which was for the crematorium, natural burial ground and pet cemetery. ECDC has had a long-standing ambition to provide a crematorium and natural burial ground within the district, and this was included in the Council's 2017-2019 Corporate Plan.

Table 1 below gives the details of various community engagement items. The key community processes are elaborated upon in the next section of the report, including the methodology and findings of the January 2021 public consultation.

As the crematorium industry is holistically litigious and competitive, ECDC scheduled community involvement to a later point to reduce the likelihood of a private firm developing within the District and losing the potential for a community asset.

**Table 1. Community Involvement Schedule**

Date	Community Involvement	Target audience	Communication Channel(s)
October/November 2018	Funeral Director Survey on Need	Local Funeral Directors	Media - Online and telephone surveys
13/07/20	Statement regarding fire at Mepal	Residents	Media - Online
31/07/20	Extraordinary (Special Full Council) Meeting	ECDC Councillors	
31/07/20	Post-release following Special Full Council	Residents	Website, social media, media
03/08/20	Radio interview following Special Full Council	Residents	Media - Radio
03/08/20	Response to Stephen Barclay MP	Recipient	Letter, email
06/08/20	Letter to Editor of the Ely Standard	Recipient	Letter, email
07/08/20	Statement for Cambridgeshire Live	Residents	Media - Online
10/08/20	Statement and press release sent to FenScene	Residents, media	Media – Magazine, online

14/08/20	Letter to Parish Councils and Members from the Leader	Parish Councillors, Members	Email
14/08/20	Press release for the Editor of the Ely Standard and Members RE: initial ecological appraisal	Members, media	Media – Online, newspaper, email
17/08/20	Meeting between the Council Leader, Chief Executive and Editor of the Ely Standard.	Media	Media – Online, newspaper
19/08/20	Further statement to Cambridgeshire Live	Residents	Media - Online
27/08/20	Radio interview with opposed residents	Residents	Media – Radio
15/09/20	ECDC presentation at an open meeting to brief Mepal Parish Council on proposals	Councillors of Mepal Parish Council	Online video conference
9/01/21	Press release: Opening of public consultation on proposals (online survey)	Residents, media, Members, employees, Parish Councillors,	Media, website, social media
w/c 11/01/21	Press release: Share information from biodiversity and ecology studies	Media, residents, employees, Members, Parish Councillors	Media, social media, website, email
w/c 11/01/21	Media interviews: Share information from biodiversity and ecology studies	Media	Media
w/c 18/01/21	Infographic: Create an infographic to summarise key points of the report	Residents, media, employees, Parish Councillors	Website, social media, media, email
w/c 18/01/21	Direct letter: To clubs who could potentially use the site	Residents - Local clubs and societies	Direct mail, email
w/c 25/01/21	Press release: Reminder about survey ahead of deadline of the consultation	Residents, media, Members, employees, Parish Councillors,	Media, website, social media

Throughout the official project launch, ECDC have used the involvement of key stakeholders to make informed decisions.

Funeral Directors are major stakeholders in a bereavement facility project, therefore their input into need and functioning of the facility is vital.

The residents provide crucial information about the local area which also assists in the function of the facility.

---

## **3 Community Involvement Process**

### **3.1 Funeral Director Survey October/November 2018**

In October/November 2018, ECDC sought feedback from local Funeral Directors on the proposals for a crematorium to better understand the need for the development and the functioning of the facility prior to any further works. The Funeral Directors were based in Ely, Chatteris, Cambridge, Willingham, Ramsay, Wisbech, Bury St Edmunds, Lakenheath, Ely, Newmarket, March, Soham and Downham Market.

The Funeral Directors were consulted on a variety of subjects surrounding the following: what crematoria they use; the amount of cremations undertaken annually; what determines cost and how charges should be set; what services and facilities should be provided at a crematorium; the average cortege drive time to a crematorium; and whether they would consider using alternative facilities if they became available.

The 11 responses received provided the council with vital information. Of note, was the finding that 73% of respondents would consider using alternative facilities in the area if they became available. As it was confirmed in November 2019 that the potential bidder had retracted their offer, this finding from the Funeral Director survey subsequently drove the project forwards.

### **3.2 Extraordinary (Special Full Council) ECDC Meeting – July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020**

Following the formulation of the initial plans for the site and with the Funeral Directors showing signs of support, an Outline Business Plan was created. An Extraordinary Meeting of ECDC (Special Full Council) took place on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 where the Outline Business Plan was presented. Due to the inclusion of exempt information (Category 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972) relating to the confidentiality of the financial details, the press and public were excluded.

It was also explained to councillors that the proposal may provide the following:

- Better access for local residents to cremation and burial services at affordable prices in line with the LGA submission to Markets and Competition Authority;
- Sustainable development of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre site; and
- A new income stream to support the requirements of the financial requirements of the Council.

Other information presented included conceptual designs, planning appraisal information and a demonstration of how the development of the site would be sustainable and ecologically sensitive.

After a full debate of the Outline Business Case for the project, a recorded vote was taken with 16 Councillors voting to approve and 6 voting against. The motion was declared carried and it was resolved that:

- a) The outline business case was approved.
- b) That a planning application for the project could be developed and submitted.
- c) Before the implementation of the project a Final Business Case would be submitted to the Finance and Asset Committee of the Council to seek final approval to implement the project.



### 3.3 Presentation to Mepal Parish Council – September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

In this briefing to Mepal Parish Council, similar information was covered as in the July Extraordinary ECDC Meeting, except for the Outline Business Plan due to its commercial sensitivity. In addition, the Parish Council were provided with an overview of the process leading up to the bereavement facility proposals, detailing the Working Party’s efforts and unfortunate decision from the recreational provider to not pursue with their bid on the site.

The purpose of the meeting was to ensure that the Parish Council members were briefed on the project plans. As such, it was not a formal decision-making meeting. After the presentation was delivered, no comments were raised as is evident from the meeting minutes<sup>1</sup>.

### 3.4 Public Consultation – January 2021

ECDC utilised the local media to release the relevant information about the new proposed facility when appropriate.

A public consultation was undertaken to obtain feedback on the intended proposals for the bereavement facility at the subject site and the public’s experiences at nearby facilities. Due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, the Council could not arrange any publicly held consultations and therefore decided to hold an online survey.

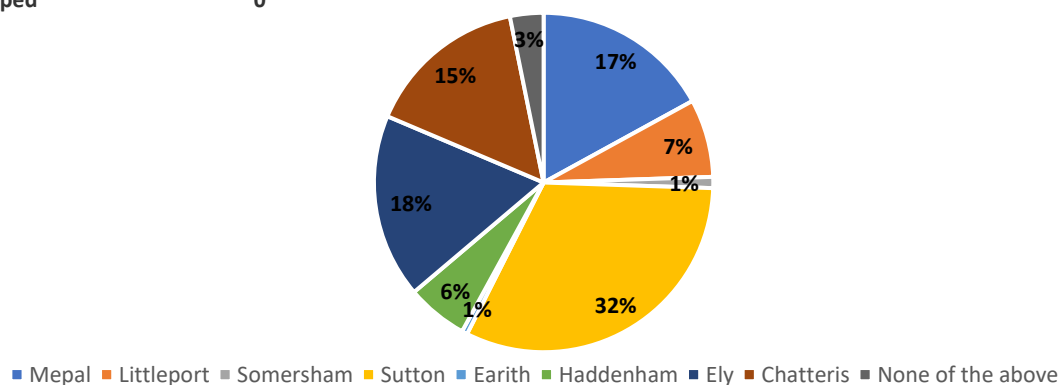
The online survey featured 28 questions which related to: need; experience at existing nearby facilities; the proposed design and green credentials; ecology; and recreation. There was a 24-day window for responses, between the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021. The Council advertised the public consultation via press releases on its website and social media posts throughout the consultation period to actively remind the public of the survey. In total, there were 188 respondents to the survey. The following sections display and analyse the results received.

#### 3.4.1 Public Consultation Results

Results for each question are presented in the charts and tables below. Where comments were left under the ‘other’ comment box, these were analysed into categories/topics raised; where certain comments could not be categorised or there was no consensus on the topic raised, the full quotation is given.

##### Q1. Which of the following towns do you live closest to?

Answered	188
Skipped	0



<sup>1</sup> Minutes available from Mepal Parish Council website: [Minutes 15th September 2020 - Mepal Parish Council](#)

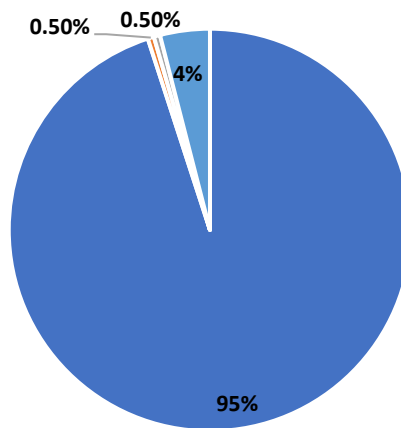
### Q2. What is your postcode?

Answered	176
Skipped	12

For the purposes of data protection, the postcode data is not given in this document. This question was included in the survey to decipher whether respondents were completing the survey multiple times which would skew the survey results. 18 postcodes were found to duplicate 2-3 times. Due to the low frequency of the duplications, it is considered unlikely that the survey has been abused in this way.

### Q3. Are you responding as...?

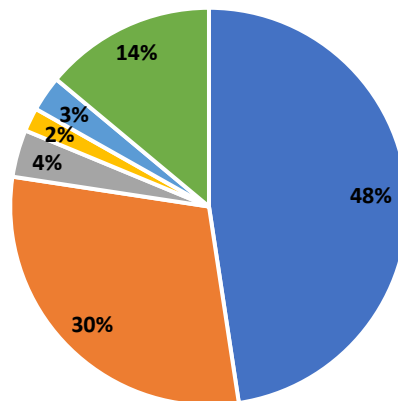
Answered	188
Skipped	0



- A local resident
- A funeral director
- A member of an access group
- A faith group leader/member
- A recreational/sporting group leader/member

### Q4. Which crematorium facility have you most frequently attended services at?

Answered	175
Skipped	13



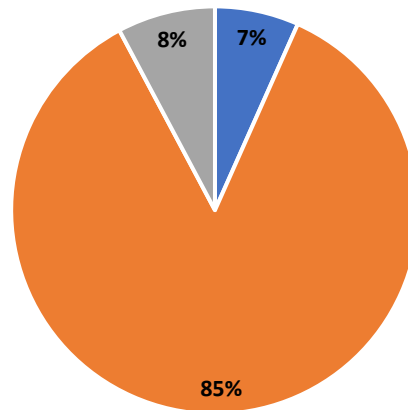
- Cambridge City Crematorium
- Fenland Crematorium
- West Suffolk Crematorium
- Cam Valley Crematorium
- Peterborough Crematorium
- Other (please specify)



Responses received to 'other'	Response count
None of the above/ crematorium from outside the established area	14
None (this has been counted separately to the above option as 'none' could mean that they do not use crematoria at all)	10
"There is also a crematorium opening in Huntingdon - we are not short of crematorium facilities in the area."	1
"I enjoyed going to Mepal outdoor centre"	1
"Answers will not establish need"	1
"Irrelevant"	1
"There is an assumption in this question that friends and family live locally"	1

**Q5. Do you have an important historical family allegiance to this facility?**

Answered 180  
Skipped 8

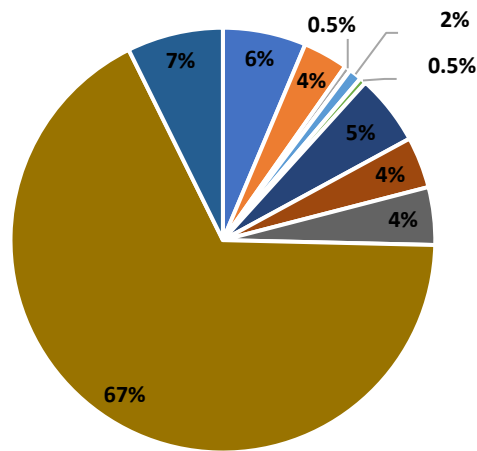


■ Yes ■ No ■ Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Response count
N/a	4
Fondness/memories/connection to Mepal Outdoor Centre	5
"Uncle and husband"	1
"Family prefers burials."	1
What does this mean/ why is it important	3

**Q6. Have you experienced any issues at local facilities for example with service experience, availability of preferred date/time or with building/parking functionality?**

Answered 172  
Skipped 16

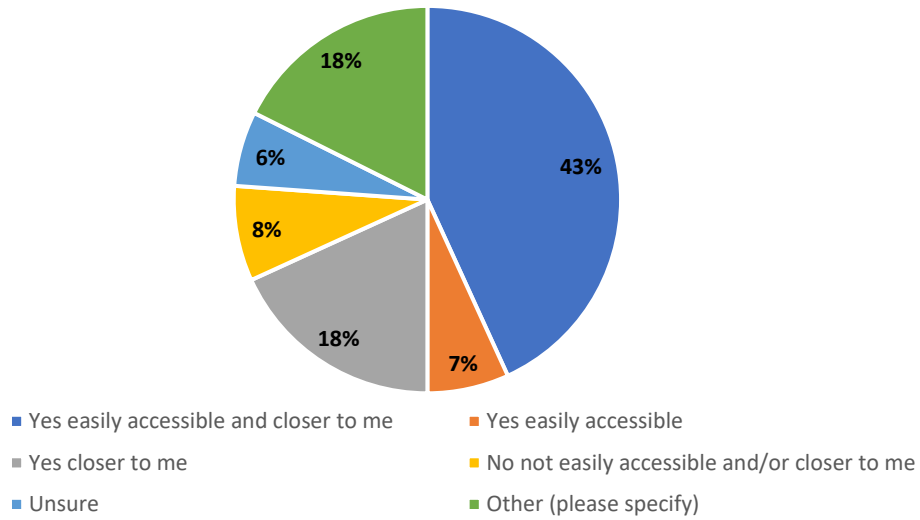


- Cambridge City Crematorium
- West Suffolk Crematorium
- Peterborough Crematorium
- Feeling rushed
- Cross-over with another funeral party
- Other (please specify)
- Fenland Crematorium
- Cam Valley Crematorium
- Service time too short
- Long waiting time to book a service
- No issues experienced

Responses received to 'other'	Response count
N/a	6
Roadworks/traffic causing stressful journey	2
Impersonal/unfriendly	2
"Chapel too small"	1
"Prefer burials"	1
"Perfect services every time, staff excellent, peaceful setting with very little traffic noise."	1
"We do not want this built"	1
"Mepal outdoors centre could have been run better but they had little funding if any."	1

**Q7. Is the proposed site easily accessible or closer to you than existing crematoria facilities?**

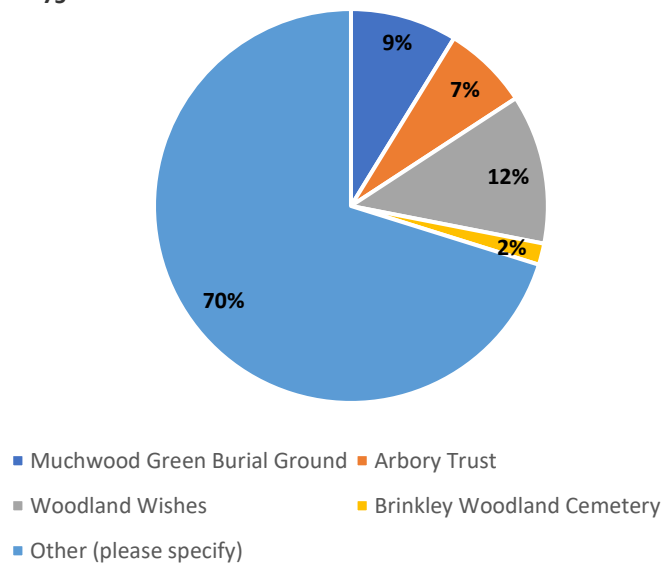
Answered 176  
Skipped 12



Responses received to 'other'	Response count
No issue with the current travel times or access to existing facilities.	11
The development is not required/ don't think it should be developed.	9
Irrelevant	6
Unsuitable location	3
Will not use it	2
"None of the above"	1
"Prefer burials"	1
"The closest outdoor pursuits facility is in Thetford forest and does not have a lake."	1

**Q8. Which natural burial facility have you most frequently attended services at?**

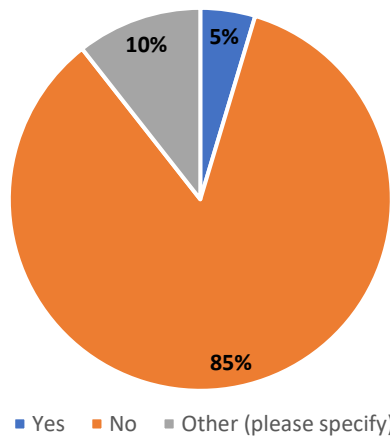
Answered 113  
Skipped 75



Responses received to 'other'	Response count
None	48
Never been to one	8
Other non-local facility	14
Irrelevant	2
"Church burial"	1
N/a	5
"Really liked Mepal outdoor centre"	1
"There is an assumption in this question that friends and relatives would live locally"	1

**Q9. Do you have an important historical family allegiance to this facility?**

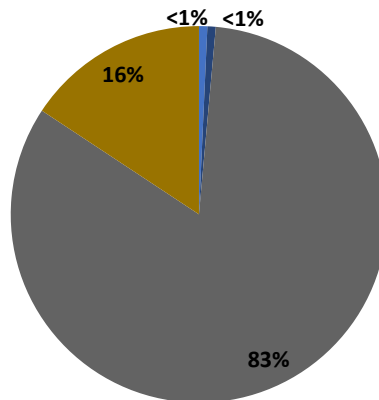
Answered 151  
Skipped 37



Responses received to 'other'	Count
N/a	9
This is a repeat of Q5	4
"My dad is buried there, my mum has bought a plot there."	1
"Yes. Loved Mepal outdoors centre"	1
"Build something else! Not this"	1

**Q10. Have you experienced any issues at local facilities with service experience, availability of preferred date/time or with building/parking functionality?**

Answered 138  
Skipped 50

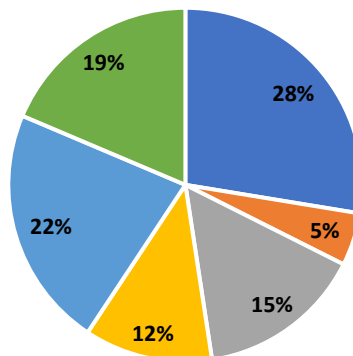


- Muchwood Green Burial Ground
- Arbory Trust
- Woodland Wishes
- Brinkley Woodland Cemetery
- Service time too short
- Feeling rushed
- Long waiting time to book a service
- Cross-over with another funeral party
- No issues experienced
- Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Count
N/a	10
None	3
Never used such facilities	4
"????"	1
"They used the plot they sold to my mum, resolved by saying she could squeeze in next to my dad."	1
"Family prefer burials"	1
The proposal is not the right form of development for the site	2

**Q11. Is the site easily accessible or closer to you than existing natural burial facilities?**

Answered 145  
Skipped 43



- Yes, it's easily accessible and closer to me
- Yes, it's easily accessible
- Yes, it's closer to me
- No, it's not easily accessible and/or closer to me
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Count
N/a	3
No issue with the current travel times or access to existing facilities	6
The development is not required/ don't think it should be developed	2
"Irrelevant"	1
Unsuitable location	3
"Will not use it"	1
"It looks like a done deal"	1
I have not attended any woodland burial facilities	5
One sided question	2
"Does it matter? When someone is dead you don't think about the nearest and quickest way to dispose of the body."	1
"I feel that the second one is closer."	1
"Which site do you mean?"	1

**Q12. Are you aware of any issues with the design and/or layout of existing nearby crematoria or natural burial facilities? Please detail and state the name of the facility.**

Answered 65  
Skipped 123

Responses received	Count
No/none	43
<b>Feedback on existing facilities</b>	
"Nearby crematoria such as Cambridge and March offer perfectly acceptable facilities for local residents."	1
"Fenland Crematorium Sparse and unfriendly."	1
"The depth of soil before you get to water."	1
"Cambridge site is too near A14. Traffic noise and difficult to access."	1
"Cambridge"	1
"Cambridge Crematorium has a depressing atmosphere, and people always end up hanging around in the car park afterwards as they only place to talk."	1
"March crematoria is well laid out the only problem is the chapel is not big enough for a large funeral"	1
<b>Feedback related to the proposals</b>	
Inappropriate location	2
Outdoor centre/something for the youth or local community is more required than another crematorium	8
Want to know about the impact on wildlife/ecology and Ouse Washes SSSI	2
<b>Undiscernible</b>	
"Yes"	1
"Three of them have trees, but the second one sometimes snows."	1
"So far away and need a car to make it a reasonable journey."	1

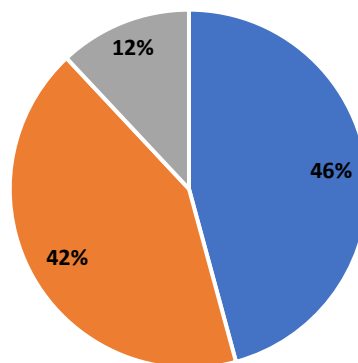
**Q13. Is there anything that works particularly well at the current facilities you have used? Please detail and state which facility.**

Answered 61  
Skipped 127

Responses received	Count
N/a	9
No	11
Outdoor centre/something for the youth or local community is more required than another crematorium	3
Comments on fondness for the outdoor centre	2
Local facilities are satisfactory	10
Existing facilities are well located	6
Appreciate that they are not right by my house	2
Nice grounds and parking	9
Friendly/helpful staff	4
Everything works well at Fenland	4
Everything works well at Cambridge	1
Everything works well at King's Lynn	1
"The new facilities at Huntingdon have been built to service our area - one of the basis for getting approval for it in the first place"	1
They are not on dangerous roads/the proposal is on a dangerous road	4

**Q14. What do you feel is the most appropriate service time?**

Answered 142  
Skipped 46

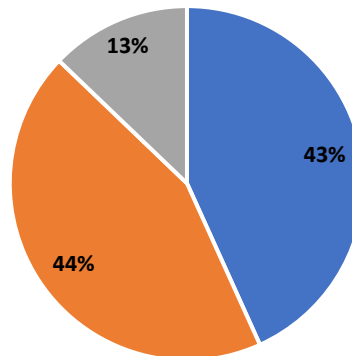


- 1 hour (including 15 minutes for entering/exiting the service)
- 45 minutes (including 15 minutes for entering/exiting the service)
- 30 minutes (including 5-10 minutes for entering/exiting the service)



**Q15. Would you like alternative service openings at the proposed facility such as Saturdays, Bank Holiday or late evenings?**

Answered 148  
Skipped 40

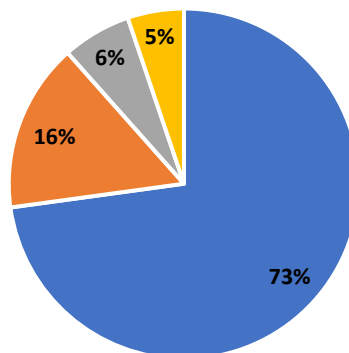


■ Yes ■ No ■ Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Count
Irrelevant, do not want the facility or think there is a need for it	7
Leisure/outdoor facility is of more use	3
"Prefer burials"	1
No preference	2
Never/no	3
"Maybe Saturday mornings if necessary."	1
"Saturdays or later opening in the summer time (i.e. during daylight) could be helpful"	1
"2am would be a good time for shift workers who need to be cremated"	1
"Poor survey"	1

**Q16. The Mepal site now has been discovered to be rich in ecology and biodiversity and the proposed crematorium project has at its core the aim to protect and further enhance the existing ecology of the site. Do you deem this to be important?**

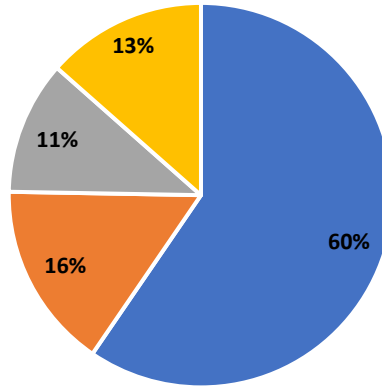
Answered 173  
Skipped 15



■ Very important ■ Important ■ Neither important or unimportant ■ Not important

**Q17. Recreational activities on the site have to be compatible with the ecology that is present on the site. Consequently the crematorium project has been designed to protect and enhance the ecology of the site. How important do you think it is to offer recreational activities?**

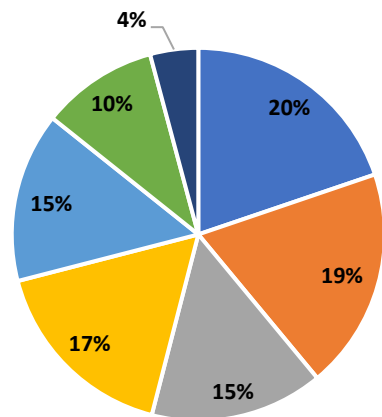
Answered 178  
Skipped 10



■ Very important ■ Important ■ Neither important or unimportant ■ Not important

**Q18. Passive and formal recreation uses are being considered that are compatible with the ecology of the site and located away from the sensitive ecological areas on the site. Please select as many of these uses in the list below that you would utilise:**

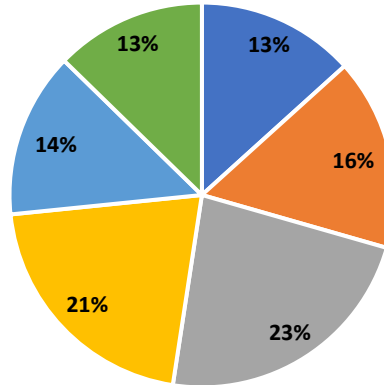
Answered 173  
Skipped 15



- Informal walkways along the northern beach area and the eastern shore of the lake, with dogs having to be on leads to protect the wildlife on site
- Accessible benches to enjoy surroundings and views around areas of the lake
- Bird hide / bird watching
- Viewing platform / small water edge deck
- Picnic areas
- Fishing (regulated by the local fishing club)
- None of the above

**Q19. Out of the following, what would you like to be included in the design? Select as many as desired.**

Answered 144  
Skipped 44

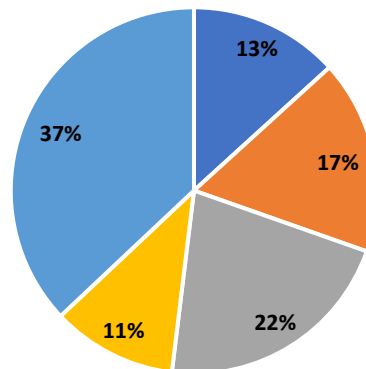


- Water features (such as fountains, reflective ponds)
- Memorial gardens
- Woodland walk
- Wildlife area
- Arboretum
- Facilities for low level recreational activities that do not detrimentally impact on the ecology of the site

**Q20. Do you like the design?\***

Answered 181  
Skipped 7

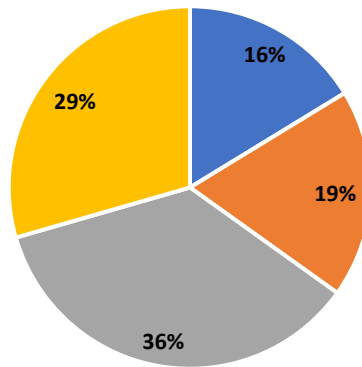
\* Appendix A contains the images that were included in the survey for respondents to base their decision on.



- Like very much
- Like
- Neutral
- Dislike
- Strongly dislike

**Q21. What do you like about the design? (You can select more than one option)**

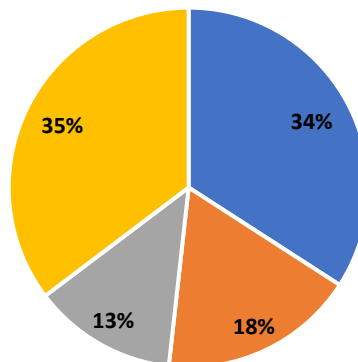
Answered 96  
Skipped 92



■ Building/architecture ■ Layout of the proposal ■ Landscaping ■ All of the above

**Q22. What do you dislike about the design? (You can select more than one)**

Answered 119  
Skipped 69



■ Building/architecture ■ Layout of the proposal ■ Landscaping ■ All of the above

**Q23. Do you have any other comments on the design?**

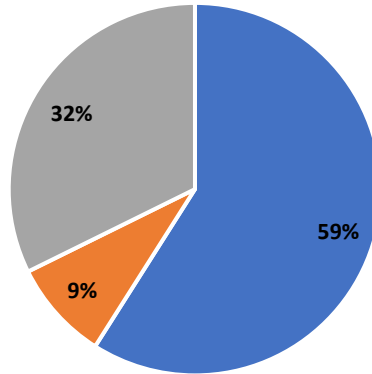
Answered 94  
Skipped 94

Responses received	Count
None or N/A	6
Development not needed/wanted	24
Retain its use as an outdoor centre or place for leisure	21
Not appropriate location	8
Inappropriate to have recreation on a cremation site	3
The survey implies planning has already been granted	2
Too close to bio-digester facility which is smelly	3
Building is unattractive or not in keeping with surrounds	16
Looks like a school/warehouse/conference room/leisure centre	6

Responses received	Count
Too modern (negative)	7
Good use of natural light	2
"I don't like the big windows so it feels like your all on show even if you can't be seen it just doesn't feel private"	1
"Its been a waste of tax payers money to make"	1
"Yes where is natural wildlife Where would a woodland be planted?"	1
"Don't like the chapel ceiling - looks over-bearing and heavy. The outside looks very good."	1
"the entrance waiting area outside the building is not covered, therefore very cold & visitors will get wet when raining waiting for service to start"	1
"Looks like every modern crematorium I've ever visited, so no substantive comment on the design. The surrounds as designed seem entirely appropriate, but I don't envisage visiting for any other reason than attending funerals, (possibly including my own)."	1
"Very very important to protect & enhance the biodiversity of the site in light of what already exists, what potentially could be encouraged & the climate & nature emergency. Would love to be able to visit & enjoy the nature responsibly. Great for area to be looked after"	1
"The first image (sketch visual) probably doesn't do the design justice & makes it look very blocky. Would probably work better from human eye level."	1
"I think the building looks a bit clinical, its obviously very impressive and the design aspects look great, but I wonder if its quite right for the settings, the use of wood though externally is really nice. The room where the services would take place appears quite business like."	1
"I like that the view is over the lake."	1
"I like a semi circle seating design in a chapel"	1
"Although the chapel is lovely and light and airy it does seem a bit clinical with little colour to soften it"	1
"Looks good - uplifting."	1
"The area of hard landscaping looks really big and open. I'm surprise at how few trees there are on site. The car park dominates the site."	1
"The front wooden entrance arch makes it look like a leisure centre and implies lack of respect."	1
"Very modern and looks peaceful"	1
"Lacks intelligence & sympathy-looks coffin shaped"	1
"A more naturalistic softer approach. Far too formal/ regimental. Site dominated by parking. These days it is possible to use ' parking groves'. What form of surfacing is proposed? Need to avoid a sea of tarmac! 20% biodiversity net gain. Renewable energy to be used. Public art incorporated Welfare facilities for those visiting the site."	1
"Situated on a dangerous road"	1

**Q24. Would you prefer to use a facility that promotes sustainability/environment throughout and uses an electric cremator that emits significantly less greenhouse gas emissions as opposed to a traditional facility with a gas cremator?**

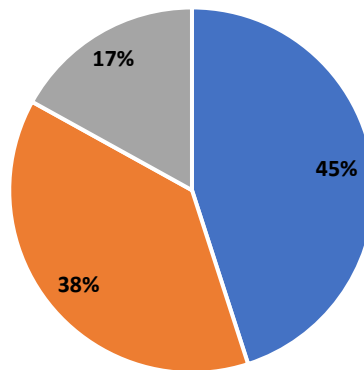
Answered 161  
Skipped 27



- Yes, I would prefer to use the sustainable facility
- No, I would prefer to use a traditional facility that I may already have a family allegiance to
- No preference

**Q25. Do you think a holistically sustainable and environmentally conscious facility would encourage more people to use the facility?**

Answered 171  
Skipped 17



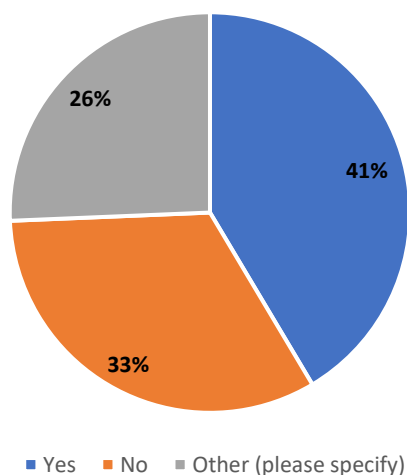
- Yes, I think it would encourage users
- No, I don't think it would encourage users
- Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Count
N/a	2
Unsure	2
We don't need a crematorium	3
We need leisure facilities	4
Cannot be truly sustainable due to its remote location	3

The site should be developed as something else	2
The facility would be for funerals not socialising/entertainment	2
People are more concerned about other things when they are arranging a funeral and suffering a bereavement	2
"I apologise for this, because although I love the idea of a more ecologically friendly crematorium process, I find it very disturbing to think that the cremation would be done by putting up a loved one essentially in a hot oven and leaving them to bake for a long period of time."	1
"I like that idea but the thought of a natural burial site would be more appealing to the younger generation"	1
"Strongly. Would be concerned about emissions from burning at the site"	1
"Not everyone is pro cremations."	1
"I think sensible council tax payers can spot green washing when they see it"	1
"Its a crematorium not a leisure activity and should be treated as such"	1
"I think some people will care but the majority will choose location over sustainability."	1
"More deaths would increase usage, has a culling programme been considered?"	1
"Inappropriate site next to biomass plant"	1

**Q26. Do you think a modular function building for the natural burials is beneficial?**

Answered 152  
Skipped 36



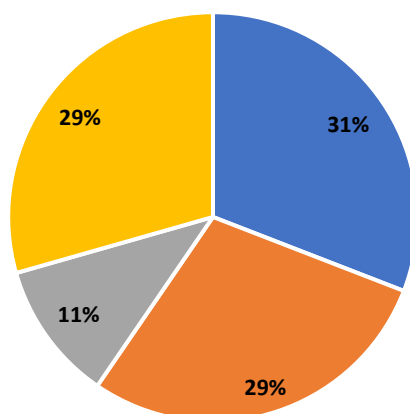
Responses received to 'other'	Count
Not sure what this means	13
No opinion or N/a	9
This is not needed	5
It should be a recreation site	3
There should not be burials	3
"Any council member who votes for this is extremely suspect."	1



“Ugly building, wrong location”	1
“Unsure why this is being considered”	1
“I think you are looking for any way to support your plans but fail to ask the correct questions”	1
“It's ugly for funerals.”	1
“Depends what is meant by modular. It needs to be a building sympathetic to the concept of natural burials. Perhaps largely wooden.”	1

**Q27. How do you see the function building best functioning?**

Answered 136  
Skipped 52



- As a bookable function suite for after a service
- As a space to gather after a service (not bookable) to reconvene and acknowledge the bereaved
- A space with a kitchenette for on-site or self-catering
- Other (please specify)

Responses received to 'other'	Count
“All of the above”	1
It shouldn't be built/ I do not want this	13
Doesn't seem appropriate to have a wake facility on site (could cause noise to services/ may be disturbed by recreational users / eats into the open countryside)	3
As part of a leisure/recreation facility	11
N/a	6
“For something else”	1
“Important to have social mixing and light refreshments.”	1
“As a bookable space that can either be for a wake or just to reconvene and acknowledge the bereaved.”	1
“I think it's a bit too early to form a view on this type of detail.”	1
“Pub”	1
“People prefer to go to their own home or village facility”	1

**Q28. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Are there any additional comments you would like to provide?**

Answered 123  
Skipped 65

Responses received	Count
Proposal would be welcomed	16
Would prefer if it was kept as outdoor centre	35
Not the right location	35
Concerned about pollution/damage to ecology	4
Concerned about costs of build (should be spent elsewhere)	4
Against the proposal (no need for another crematorium in district)	27
No further comment	2

### 3.4.2 Public Consultation Analysis

#### 3.4.2.1 General information about survey respondents

The majority (32%) of respondents to the survey live closest to Sutton, followed by Ely (18%) and closely by Mepal (17%). As just 3% of respondents did not reside near to the stipulated towns (selecting 'none of the above'), it can be inferred that the results of the survey represent local views. 95% of those that participated in the survey were local residents, 4% were recreational/sporting leaders/members. The remaining 1% was made up by a Funeral Director and member of an access group.

#### 3.4.2.2 Existing local crematoria

Cambridge City Crematorium is the crematorium facility used the most often by 48% of respondents, followed by Fenland Crematorium (30%). Cam Valley is the least used local facility, with just 2% of respondents selecting this site. 14% gave alternative views under the 'other' comment box; many of these people stipulated a facility outside of the area or answered none of the above. A similar amount of people stated 'none' which could mean that they have not used any of the listed facilities, or that they do not use crematoria at all.

When respondents were asked if they had an important historical family allegiance to the facility they selected in the previous question, 85% said no, 8% selected 'other' and 7% answered yes. It is evident from the commentary provided in the 'other' comments that this question caused some confusion. The question intended to ask whether the public has family allegiance to the crematorium facilities they selected in Question 4. However, several comments (36% of the 'other' responses) discussed people's allegiance and experiences at the former Mepal Outdoor Centre. Further, some of the written answers implied that the respondent did not understand the question.

67% of respondents have not experienced any issues at existing local crematoria. It is noted that a small number of respondents have experienced issues locally, with 5% saying they have felt rushed, 4% have experienced a long waiting time to book a service and a further 4% have crossed paths with another funeral party. 7% voted 'other', many of such respondents commented with not applicable (n/a) however some individuals were in agreement that they had experienced a stressful journey (due to roadworks/traffic) or that the staff had been inadequate. Again, someone mentioned the former Outdoor Centre suggesting they would like it reinstated and another individual said they do not want the proposal built.

The proposed site is easily accessible and closer to 43% of respondents than existing crematoria facilities. A further 18% said it is closer to them and 7% said it was easily accessible. 8% said it is not easily accessible and/or closer to them. 6% were unsure and the last 18% voted 'other'. From the comments provided, there was a consensus amongst 35% of individuals which had no issue with the current travel times/access to existing facilities. Similarly, 29% of those that selected 'other' stated that the proposal is not required or that they do not think it should be built. Several people think that the proposal is in an unsuitable location or stated that they will not use the facility.

### **3.4.2.3 Existing natural burial grounds**

When the public were asked which natural burial facility they had most frequently attended, 12% voted for Woodland Wishes, 9% voted for Muchwood Green Burial Ground, 7% voted Arbory Trust and 2% voted for Brinkley Woodland Cemetery. 70% of respondents selected 'other'. 60% of the comments stated 'none' which implies that they have either not used the facilities listed or a natural burial ground in general. 17.5% provided the name of a non-local natural burial ground and a further 10% clearly stated that they have not used one before. Other comments mentioned that they utilise church burials, their views on the former outdoor centre, and that the question assumes friends/relatives are local. Respondents were also asked if they had an important family allegiance to the natural burial facility they selected/stated, 85% said that they did not. Just 5% said that they do have an allegiance and 10% provided additional commentary. Many individuals commented with n/a and some stated that this was a repeat of Question 5. One individual suggested they may have allegiance as their parents have assigned burial plots, another said that something else should be being built and one individual mentioned allegiance/experience at the former outdoor centre.

Most respondents (83%) have not experienced issues at natural burial grounds. An individual had experienced a long waiting time to book a service and one individual had encountered an issue at Muchwood Burial Ground. 16% selected 'other', with 45% commenting n/a, 18% stating they have not used such facilities and 13.5% stating none. 9% of the comments also stated that the proposal is not the right type of development for the site.

The respondents were also asked whether the proposed site is more easily accessible or closer to them than existing natural burial facilities. 28% said it is easily accessible and closer to them, 15% said it is closer to them and 5% said it is easily accessible. 22% were unsure, 12% said it is not easily accessible and/or closer to them and the last 19% selected other. The comments provided were quite varied however 22% said they do not have any issues with the current travel times or access to existing facilities, 18.5% said they have not been to any woodland burial facilities, 11% stated n/a and a further 11% stated the proposed site is an unsuitable location.

### **3.4.2.4 Further feedback on design and experience at local facilities**

Question 12 was an open-ended question which sought feedback on the design/layout of existing crematoria and natural burial sites. Most people who participated in the survey skipped this question, with just 65 out of 188 answering this question. 67% of answers stated no/none. 11% provided feedback on the existing facilities, with several discussing issues at Cambridge Crematorium including accessibility, traffic noise, poor atmosphere, and lack of space to gather/reconvene. A couple of respondents remarked upon issues at Fenland Crematorium which relate to its atmosphere and lack of space in the chapel however, one of these respondents did say that it is well laid out. A further individual stated that Cambridge and Fenland are "perfectly acceptable" facilities. 18.5% gave remarks on the proposals; many of whom suggested that an outdoor centre/something for the youth/local community is more required than a crematorium, some also stated that the proposal was in an

inappropriate location and others shared concerns about the impact it would have on ecology. The remaining few comments were indiscernible in terms of what they related to.

Contrastingly, the next question gave respondents the ability to freely comment on things that work particularly well at the existing facilities; 61 out of 188 answered this question. 33% answered with n/a or no. 16% stated that the local facilities are satisfactory, 15% complemented the grounds and parking facilities. 6.5% remarked that staff are friendly/helpful and 6.5% remarked that everything works well at Fenland. A further 6.5% stated that they are not situated on dangerous roads and implied that the proposal is situated on a dangerous road. 5% suggested that an outdoor centre/something for the youth/local community is more required than a crematorium. A few others expressed their fondness for the Outdoor Centre, had an appreciation that the facilities are not 'right by' their homes and stated things work well at Cambridge or King's Lynn.

#### **3.4.2.5 Attributes of the proposed crematorium- service times and availability**

With regards to views on the most appropriate service time, 46% of respondents selected 1 hour, 42% selected 45 minutes and only 12% selected 30 minutes. There was quite a divide in the responses to Question 15, 44% think that the proposed facility should not offer Saturday, Bank Holiday or late evening service openings whereas 43% think that they should be on offer. 13% responded 'other', 37% of these people commented that this was irrelevant as they do not want the facility or think there is a need for it. 16% stated a leisure/outdoor facility is of more use. A further 16% stated never/no (which may mean that they do not want these service times) and 10.5% had no preference. Some suggested Saturday appointments and put forwards ideas of later evening appointments in the summer or early morning appointments for shift workers. One individual remarked "poor survey".

#### **3.4.2.6 Views on ecology and recreation**

73% of respondents think that it is 'very important' to protect and further enhance the existing ecology of the site. 16% selected 'important', 6% selected 'neither important or unimportant' and 5% selected 'not important'. There is a clear view locally that the ecology of the site should be respected in the development of the site.

60% of respondents believe it is 'very important' to offer recreational activities within the scheme. 16% think it is 'important', 11% think it is 'neither important or unimportant' and 13% think it is 'not important'. Out of the listed recreational uses, many respondents voted for informal walkways, picnic areas, viewing platforms/small water edge decks, accessible benches and bird hide/watching.

When the public were asked what they would like included in the design, 23% selected woodland walk, 21% selected wildlife area, 16% selected memorial gardens and 14% selected arboretum. The least favoured elements were water features (selected by 13%) and facilities for low level recreation that does not impact the ecology on site (selected by 13%).

#### **3.4.2.7 Proposed design and functional aspects**

The public were shown conceptual images and designs of the site and Question 20 asked whether they liked the design. 13% selected 'like very much', 17% selected 'like', 22% were neutral, 11% selected 'dislike' and the majority, 37%, selected 'strongly dislike'. When asked what they liked about the design, almost half of the survey respondents skipped the question. 16% liked the building/architecture, 19% liked the layout, 36% liked the landscaping and 29% selected all three of these. More respondents (119 in total) answered the following question which asked what they disliked about the design. Here, 34% selected building/architecture, 18% selected the layout, 13%

selected landscaping, which corresponds with the findings from the previous question. 35% answered that they did not like all three of these aspects.

Question 23 was open ended and asked for additional comments on the design; half of the 188 survey participants provided commentary. The responses varied greatly and not all comments were related to the design. 25.5% of the respondents stated that the development is not needed/wanted. 22% stated that the site should be retained as an outdoor centre or place for leisure. 17% said that the building is unattractive or not in keeping with the surroundings, a further 6% said that it looked like a building for another use (for example, a leisure centre or school) as opposed to a crematorium and 7.5% said it looked 'too modern'. 8.5% stated that the site was not the appropriate location for the development which was similarly echoed by another 3% stating it is too close to the bio-digester facility which is odorous. 3% of individuals agreed that it is inappropriate (insensitive) to have recreation on a bereavement site. Various other comments were provided but due to the variation in responses, they could not be analysed and separated into topics and so the full quotation is provided in the earlier table.

The public were also consulted on their views on sustainability credentials of the proposal. 59% stated that they would prefer to use a sustainable facility which has an electric cremator, 32% did not have a preference and 9% would prefer to use a traditional facility that they may have a family allegiance to. The data suggests that in general, the local view is in preference to using a sustainable facility.

45% of respondents believe that a holistically sustainable and environmentally conscious facility would encourage more people to use the facility, 38% disagreed with this view and 17% selected 'other'. Many different views were expressed here and again not all were directly linked to the question; 14% stated that there is a need for leisure facility. 10% stated we do not need a crematorium. A further 10% stated that the proposal cannot be considered truly sustainable due to its remote location. 14% were either unsure or entered n/a. Several other views were raised each by at least two individuals which included: the site should be developed as something else; the facility would be for funerals not socialising/entertainment; and that people have other things on their mind when they are organising a funeral.

With regards to offering a modular function building for natural burials, 41% of respondents stated that this would be beneficial, 33% disagreed and the remaining 26% selected 'other'. Not everyone understood this question as 34% stated in the 'other' comments that they were unsure on what the question meant. 23% had no opinion or entered n/a. 13% said that it is not needed, 8% stated it should be a recreation site and 8% stated there should be no burials. Some other individuals remarked that the design is not aesthetically pleasing.

31% see the function building best functioning as a bookable function suite for after a service, 29% see it as a space best for gathering after a service (not bookable) and 11% think it should be a kitchenette for on-site or self-catering. A large proportion of respondents (29%) selected 'other'. The majority of these respondents (32.5%) said that it should not be built/that they do not want this (in reference to the proposal itself) and 27.5% think it should be part of a leisure/recreation facility. 7.5% do not think it is appropriate to have a wake facility on site at all. 15% stated n/a.

### 3.4.2.8 Additional comments

The final question of the survey (Question 28) gave the public the opportunity to provide any last comments and views. 123 out of the 188 respondents gave commentary, the following was concluded:

- 28.5% would prefer if the site was kept as an outdoor centre
- 28.5% do not think the site is the right location for the development
- 22% are against the proposal as they do not think there is a need for another crematorium in the district
- 13% would welcome the development
- 3.3% are concerned about pollution/ecological damage
- 3.3% are concerned about costs of the build and think the money should be spent elsewhere
- 1.6% stated they had no further comments to make

The overall sentiment held is as follows:

Sentiment Held	%
For	13.0
Against	85.4
No Further Comment	1.6

---

## 4 Conclusion

ECDC and its teams worked with local Funeral Directors and various Councillors to develop the project, with emphasis on the functioning of the crematorium itself throughout the pre-submission planning process.

Whilst it is unfortunate that the potential recreational bidder decided not to take the former outdoor centre on, the ECDC Working Party worked effectively to explore alternative uses of the site. Having found support from local Funeral Directors who are key stakeholders in a bereavement facility, the proposal was carried forward with various plans developed including the Outline Business Case which was approved by 16 of 22 Councillors.

The Council strongly felt it was essential to schedule public involvement to a later point to reduce the likelihood of a private firm developing within the District and losing the potential for a community asset.

The functioning of the bereavement facility is based on vital input from: funeral directors, clergy, local crematoria knowledge and nationwide crematoria knowledge provided by The CDS Group and Nexus Planning.

Local resident views and concerns have been voiced. It is clear from the public consultation that there is a fond sentiment towards the former Mepal Outdoor Centre. The Council endeavoured to secure the site for recreation however this has not been possible as has been demonstrated.

ECDC will continue to co-operate with residents throughout the project process and beyond.

The main aim of this project is to provide a holistic bereavement service to the community. The Council will provide a fully functional, inclusive and pleasant experience to its residents.

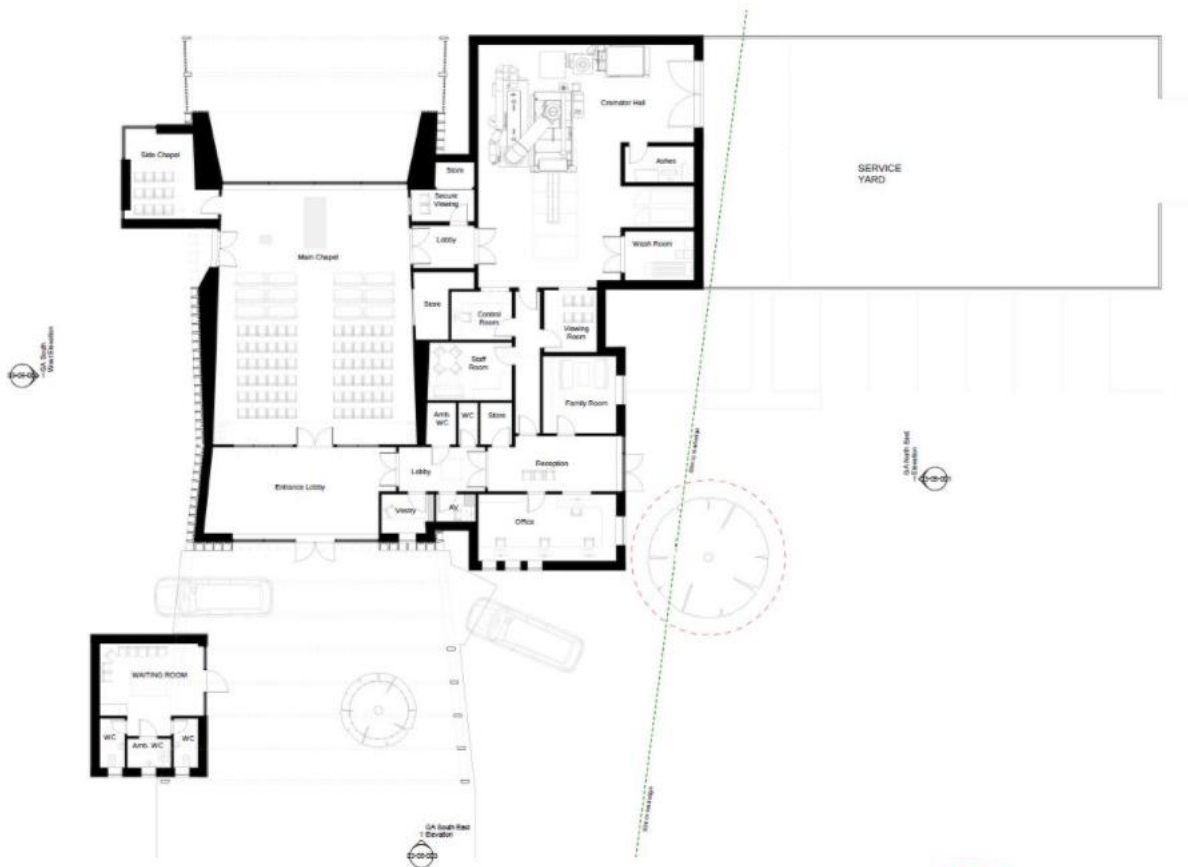


## Appendix A – Design images provided in public consultation.

Sketch visual of crematorium

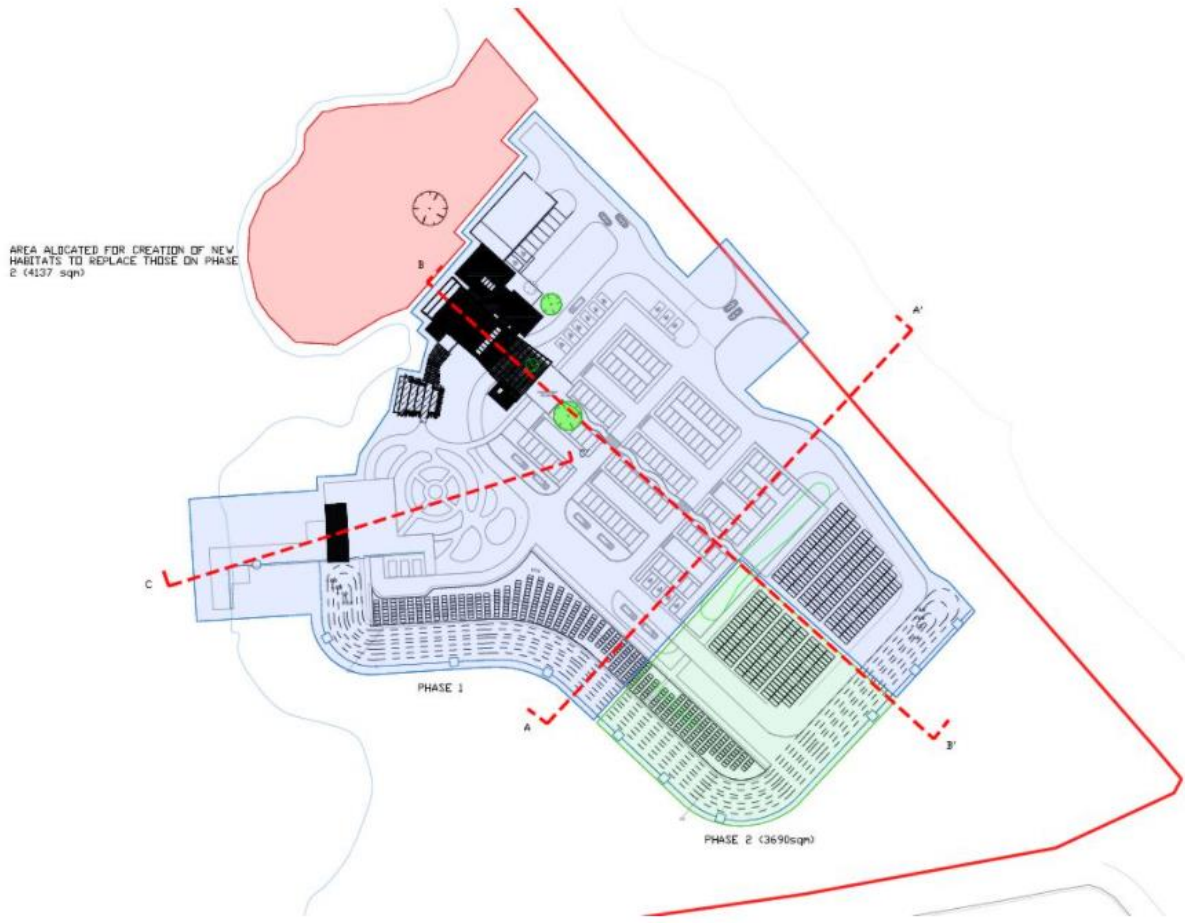


Proposed layout plan



DRAFT

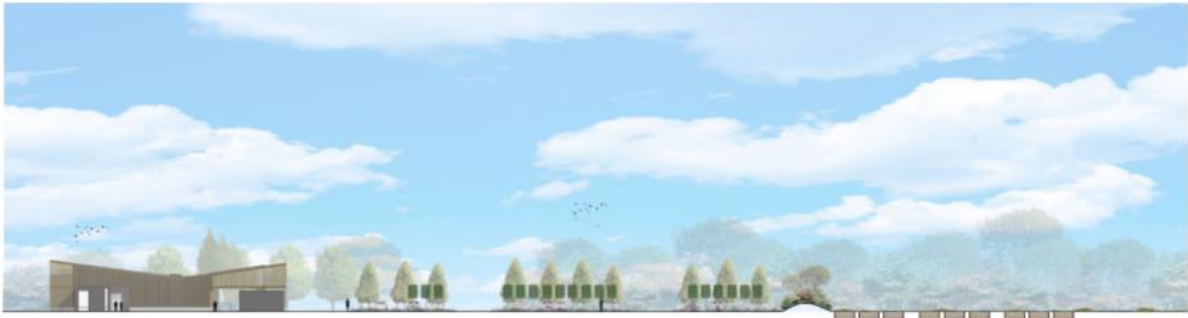
Conceptual landscape plan - Cross sectional areas



Conceptual landscape plan - View AA



Conceptual landscape plan- View BB



Conceptual landscape plan - View CC



Aerial CGI





Entrance CGI



External building CGI



Interior looking out CGI



Rear looking in CGI

