

Appendix D

LB Southwark Cemeteries Consultation Report 2011



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1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Southwark Council is undertaking a major review of its burial provision, due to the borough's cemeteries being nearly full. There is limited burial space available in the borough's three existing cemeteries at Camberwell Old Cemetery, Camberwell New Cemetery and Nunhead Cemetery. Future options have to be considered if Southwark Council is to continue to offer a burial service to residents.
- 1.2 From 4th July to 30th September 2011, Southwark Council carried out a consultation with residents and stakeholders.
- 1.3 Landscape architects were commissioned to assess the situation in Southwark's three Cemeteries and draw up a number of options for the future. These options provided the basis for the consultation.
- 1.4 The consultation has been a valuable exercise in harnessing the views of both Southwark residents and other stakeholders about the future of burial services in the borough.
- 1.5 There have been 942 responses to the questionnaire with people being open and vocal about a highly sensitive subject. The responses have been of high quality with over 1,000 individual comments, which have been used to help inform this report.
- 1.6 Over 170 people attended consultation meetings in the borough.
- 1.7 The results of the questionnaire have indicated that 77% of residents will require cremation in the future, compared with 22% requiring burial. These statistics vary somewhat from UK National averages of 70% and 30% respectively, suggesting a slightly higher percentage than average for those requiring cremation. Southwark Cemetery & Crematorium service is currently performing burials for around 30% of service users.
- 1.8 It is hard to ascertain whether these results imply a shift in people's perceived future needs or they are influenced by the demographic responding to the survey (a significant number of responses came from residents living in the immediate area of Honor Oak Recreation ground and Camberwell New Cemetery).
- 1.9 However what is clear from the results is that there remains a significant number of Southwark residents who will require burial in the future.
- 1.10 People's reasons for their choice of burial or cremation were varied.
- 1.11 A key theme with respondents who chose cremation is the lack of space in the borough to perform burials. Many were concerned with the potential for losing valuable green space, feeling that in today's society open space for recreation and enjoyment was vital to the health of a population for whom obesity and ill health is on the increase. Strong feelings were expressed by many on the subject, with the comment that 'Land is for the Living' featuring on several forms submitted.
- 1.12 Many of those requiring burial emphasised their emotional attachment to the borough and felt strongly about being buried in the place in which they had lived all their lives. Many have several generations of family buried in Southwark and felt it important to be buried close to other family members.

Those who have family members buried in the borough value being able to visit them without having too far to travel.

- 1.13 On the question of whether it was important for Southwark to continue to provide burial services for its residents, opinions were fairly evenly divided. Family and cultural traditions were prominent reasons given for those who consider burial provision to be important.
- 1.14 Of those who did not consider it important for Southwark to provide burial, most cited the reasons mentioned in 1.6 there simply isn't the space in the borough and it is unacceptable to use space that currently exists for recreation.
- 1.15 Some respondents who did not consider burial provision to be important qualified this by stating that they were in favour of burial outside the borough and felt that solutions could be reached, possible in partnership with other Local Authorities, to provide such a service. However, there was also concern that if burial was moved out of the Borough, barriers such as economic disadvantage and lack of mobility would restrict people's ability to visit loved ones graves.
- 1.16 Respondents were asked to rate eight possible options for the future of burial in the Borough.
- 1.17 The most popular option was the **reuse of common graves**. This was considered the most sustainable long term option, having the least impact on both the Borough's open spaces and bereaved relatives.
- 1.18 The next most popular option was the **reuse of private graves**. For both options it was felt that all efforts would need to be made to contact living family members. It was suggested that records should be kept of reused graves and alternative memorials to the deceased created.
- 1.19 **The use of burial chambers** was cited as the third most popular option. This received support because it was felt they provide opportunity to maximise the use of available space. Some respondents were concerned about the potential for vandalism and others around how remains might ultimately be disposed of. This option would require a major cultural adjustment but could be explored as part of a package of options.
- 1.20 The fourth most popular option was **working with other local authorities to source shared land for new cemeteries**. There was some support for this option, which would relieve pressure on Southwark to find space. However, again some people were concerned about having to visit graves outside the borough. Comments were made on the growing interest in woodland burials, as being sustainable and environmentally friendly which would have to be undertaken outside the Borough and could be included in a package of options offered.
- 1.21 **Finding a burial site outside Southwark** was the fifth option chosen. This did not receive a great deal of support, for the reasons expressed above regarding accessibility.

- 1.22 **Share a cemetery elsewhere or buy graves from a private supplier.** This was not a popular option. Buying graves from a private supplier was considered to be problematic as there would be no guarantee as to the sustainability for the service that might be offered; making it clear that people would prefer to have confidence in their local authority to provide burial services.
- 1.23 One of the least favourite options was **to stop burying in Southwark.** This received very little support. Even those with a preference for cremation were still in favour of people having burial as a choice.
- 1.24 Consequently whilst over 50% of respondents did not consider Southwark burial provision to be important the option to stop burying was not rated highly.
- 1.25 **Use of some or all of Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burials** was the least favoured option and the one that attracted the most comment.
- 1.26 A total of 214 comments were received in support of not using Honor Oak Recreation ground for burials. The key reasons for not using the site included:
- Consideration for it's current use for recreation (see Chapter 9 for details of a usage survey undertaken)
 - Lack of available open space in the Borough
 - Concerns that the Council would choose this as the cheapest option, without consideration of the impact its loss would have on the young people of the local area, who value it for recreation.
- 1.27 There appears to be a groundswell of local opinion opposing the use of Honor Oak Recreation Ground for future burial. There is an active and vocal Friends group who have previously gathered over 2000 signatures for an online petition opposing its use. A campaign by the group to encouraged supporters to complete the questionnaire may well have had an impact on the results.
- 1.28 There were also a relatively small, but significant number of responses that indicated people would be in favour of using some or all of Honor Oak Recreation Ground. It was felt that the land was purchased for this purpose and should be used as such. This was a predominant response from church / faith leaders. Some respondents felt that Honor Oak Park was an underused resource.
- 1.29 The usage survey of Honor Oak Recreation ground during April, May and September provides a snapshot of its current use. During the summer months it does appear to enjoy regular use by the local community. The playground is frequented by families with young children and many use the space as a pedestrian through route. During the football season the pitches are utilised for training by junior football clubs.
- 1.30 Using the data collected it has been possible to extrapolate that the space would expect to attract nearly 280,000 visitors per year. However this figure is not significantly higher than parks in Southwark that are less than half its size. Chapter 9 details this analysis.

- 1.31 It is clear from the consultation that the subject of future burial and bereavement services are something that Southwark residents feel strongly about. The Borough needs to be able to offer a package of options that are acceptable to residents and it is intended that this consultation will help inform this. Many respondents commented on the need for people to be fully informed about their options for burial or cremation and the long term implications of their choices. It may be desirable in the future to affect a programme of public information that does this.
- 1.32 Chapter 5 of this report provides a detailed breakdown and analysis of responses to the Future of Southwark's Cemeteries Questions

2. Background

2.1 Cemeteries in Southwark

- 2.2 In the first 50 years of the 19th century the population of London more than doubled from 1 million to 2.3 million. At this time all London's dead were buried in small parish churchyards, which quickly became dangerously overcrowded, leading to decaying matter getting into the water supply and causing epidemics.
- 2.3 In 1832 Parliament passed a bill encouraging the establishment of private cemeteries outside London, and later passed a bill to close all inner London churchyards to new deposits. Over the next decade seven cemeteries were established.
- 2.4 **Nunhead Cemetery**, opened in 1840, occupies 20.5 hectares and is the second largest Victorian cemetery in London. It is one of what is known as the 'Magnificent Seven'.
- 2.5 In 1975 Southwark Council took possession of the privately owned Nunhead Cemetery when its owners, the London Cemetery Company went into liquidation.
- 2.6 The site has operated as a cemetery from that time but is now considered full other than a few pre-purchased plots.
- 2.7 In 1999 Heritage Lottery funding was secured to restore the site to its former glory. The works were completed in May 2001. Because of the site's importance for nature conservation part of it was designated as a local nature reserve in 2003.
- 2.8 In the 1850's, The Camberwell Burial Board was established to solve the problem of Camberwell's burial shortage in its churchyards. In 1855 the board bought 12 hectares of meadow land and established it as the Burial Ground of St Giles, Camberwell and now called **Camberwell Old Cemetery**.
- 2.9 When it became clear that Camberwell Old Cemetery was fast using up space **Camberwell New Cemetery** was opened in 1927. It currently occupies 14.85 hectares of burial space. Approximately 4.3 hectares of the site is currently used for recreation and leisure and is now known as **Honor Oak Recreation Ground**.
- 2.10 **Honor Oak Crematorium** was built in 1939. The crematorium has a chapel which can hold approximately 150 people for religious and non religious services. 1.5 hectares of space to the north and south of the crematorium is used for interment and memorialisation of ashes.
- ### 2.11 Burial Trends
- 2.12 Southwark's Cemetery Service is responsible for, on average, 380 burials per year of which 210 are in new plots and the rest are re-openings of pre-purchased plots for family member interments.
- 2.13 Graves are most frequently sold as double depth plots (2 interments) as families are keen to purchase enough space to bury relatives together.

- 2.14 A baseline study was conducted in April/May 2011 that began the process of gaining an understanding of the future burial/cremation needs of Borough residents.
- 2.15 This study indicated that 33% of residents would opt for burial, for varied reasons. This figure of 33% correlates with the national average of those requiring future burial. This figure suggests that the need exists for Southwark Council to continue to provide burial space for its residents.
- 2.16 **Cabinet Report**
- 2.17 In April 2011 a report on 'Consultation Options for Future Service Strategy for Southwark Cemeteries' was presented to Southwark Council's Cabinet by Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling.
- 2.18 The report outlined that there was an urgent need for a full review of bereavement services in the borough, as burial space was almost exhausted.
- 2.19 Councillor Hargrove committed to engage with local stakeholders and Southwark residents, and involve them in the decision about the future of the service.
- 2.20 Short term projects to create more burial space in existing cemeteries were identified.
- 2.21 Southwark Council's Cabinet agreed the recommendations in the report including a communication plan for consulting with residents and stakeholders on the future of Southwark's Cemeteries.
- 2.22 The plan identified stakeholder groups who needed to be consulted, set out a timetable for consultation and the key questions to be included in the questionnaire.

3. Burial Options

- 3.1 A key objective of the consultation was to seek feedback on eight options identified in the cabinet report that the Council must consider in planning a long-term strategy for Southwark's Cemetery Service.

A) Re-use of common graves (public graves owned by the council)

i) Top Up

Re-use common graves by making up the soil level on top of the area of graves in order to provide the appropriate depth for new burials. This avoids the disturbance of human remains. It is also possible to use chamber systems on top of common graves to achieve the same effect.

ii) Faculty Re-use

Re-use common graves on consecrated land. This is land that has been dedicated for sacred use in a ceremony performed by the Bishop. With permission or 'faculty' from the Church of England, providing the graves are old enough, the remains can be exhumed and reburied in another area of consecrated ground.

B) Re-use of private grave areas

Burial authorities in London can re-use privately purchased graves after 75 years but only once notices and letters have failed to identify living relatives who can make a claim to the grave.

i) Reclaiming space

In the past some graves have been purchased to accommodate 2 or more people but subsequently not fully utilised. In these circumstances it is possible to reclaim and sell remaining space. This option still requires notices and every effort to be made to identify any living relative. The City of London, Newham and Croydon councils currently reclaim un-used space in this way

ii) Lift and Deepen

Re-use private graves through a practice called 'Lift and deepen' where the human remains are reburied at a greater depth to allow for burials on top. This allows the appropriate depth for the new burial.

C) Use of burial chambers

The installation of chamber systems or mausoleum systems is popular approach to burial taken in some European countries. Due to the nature of the systems it is possible to fit more graves into a space compared to traditional earthen burials. However some argue that this relocates the problem of lack of space to above the ground.

These systems require less maintenance, but the initial costs of purchasing and installing burial chambers can be more expensive for customers and providers.

D) Find a burial site outside of Southwark

It may be possible to identify land outside of Southwark that could be purchased and used as burial space. If this is possible and not too expensive, residents of the borough would need to travel to wherever the site is to visit the graves of loved ones. The council does not currently own land that is suitable for this use.

E) Share a cemetery elsewhere or buy graves from a private supplier

The Council could seek a partner or partners who the council could work with to find an innovative solution to the lack of burial space. A local funeral director is in the process of developing land outside the borough as a private cemetery and early discussions have been held with him with a view to pre-purchasing space within that facility which may be operational within the next two years

F) Work with other local authorities to source land for a new cemetery

As the majority of inner London Local Authorities are in a similar position to Southwark it may be possible to find solutions to this issue together. The council is working with neighbouring boroughs to think through the possible solutions to this issue.

G) Use all or some of Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground for burial space

Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground was purchased for burial space in 1901 but has been used as a recreation ground for some years as the land was not needed for burial space.

Local residents use Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground for football, the children's play area, dog walking and general recreation. The land would provide burial for about 30 years but recreation activities would no longer be possible.

The loss of the football pitches could put additional pressure on other nearby facilities at One Tree Hill, Brenchley Gardens (open space only) and Peckham Rye Park (sports facilities and children's play) in Southwark and Blythe Hill Fields (children's play area) and Hilly Fields (sports facilities and children's play area) in Lewisham.

H) Stop burying in Southwark

Providing a burial service is not a statutory responsibility. The council must ensure the legal disposal of any person who dies within its boundary where no suitable funeral arrangements have been made. If burials in the borough cease the crematorium would continue to operate and hence the council could continue to meet this duty.

Maintaining cemeteries in its ownership is a statutory responsibility of the local authority. Ceasing to bury would mean a year on year reduction in income for Southwark, whilst the costs of maintenance would remain.

People wanting to bury relatives could purchase graves at cemeteries in neighbouring boroughs though they would be charged up to 3 times the standard residential rate.

4. Consultation Methods

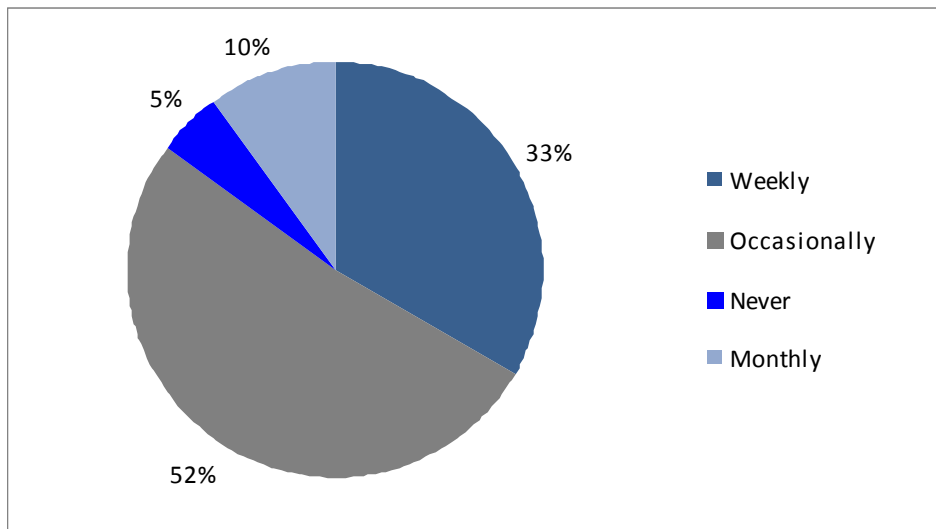
- 4.1 The public consultation on the Future of Southwark's Cemeteries took place between 4th July and 30th September 2011.
- 4.2 **Questionnaire**
- 4.3 A questionnaire and information leaflet outlining the options was distributed widely throughout the consultation period.
- 4.4 The consultation literature aimed to help residents to gain a clearer understanding of the options available to the service and their implications. The questionnaire asked people to rate these options.
- 4.5 In addition to feedback on the eight options, the questionnaire was designed to help Southwark Council to understand the current and future needs of residents in relation to the borough's bereavement services.
- People were asked to describe how often they visited the cemeteries or crematoria in the borough and the reasons for their visits.
 - They were asked if they had a preference for burial or cremation and what the basis was for their choice.
 - Importantly, regardless of their own choice of either future burial or cremation, they were asked if they felt it was important for Southwark Council to continue to provide burial space for its residents.
 - All respondents were invited to rate the 8 options outlined in the questionnaire.
 - People were asked to comment on their choices.
 - Demographic information, including respondents' postcodes, borough of residence and faith was collected.
- 4.6 The online version of the questionnaire went live on the Southwark Council web site on 4th July 2011 and closed on 30th September.
- 4.7 A total of 4,656 paper copies of the questionnaire were sent by direct mail:
- 961 to stakeholder mailing lists of Friends / Resident groups, Churches/ Faith groups and Cemetery users
 - 2,793 to Lewisham addresses and 902 to Southwark addresses in the neighbourhood of Camberwell New cemetery and Honor Oak Recreation Ground.
- 4.8 Questionnaires could also be collected from several locations including:
- Funeral Directors Offices in Southwark & Lewisham
 - Southwark Libraries
 - Southwark Cemetery Office
 - Southwark Community Council meetings
 - Consultation meetings and events
- 4.9 Details of the online questionnaire and consultation were featured in the July issue of Southwark Life magazine that was distributed to all households in the borough.
- 4.10 **Public and Targeted Meetings**
- 4.11 Seven consultation meetings were held during the period July – September.
- 4.12 People attending meetings were given a presentation detailing the options and the opportunity to raise questions and comment on the cemetery service.

5. Survey Results

5.1 This chapter provides an analysis of responses to Southwark's cemeteries consultation questionnaire.

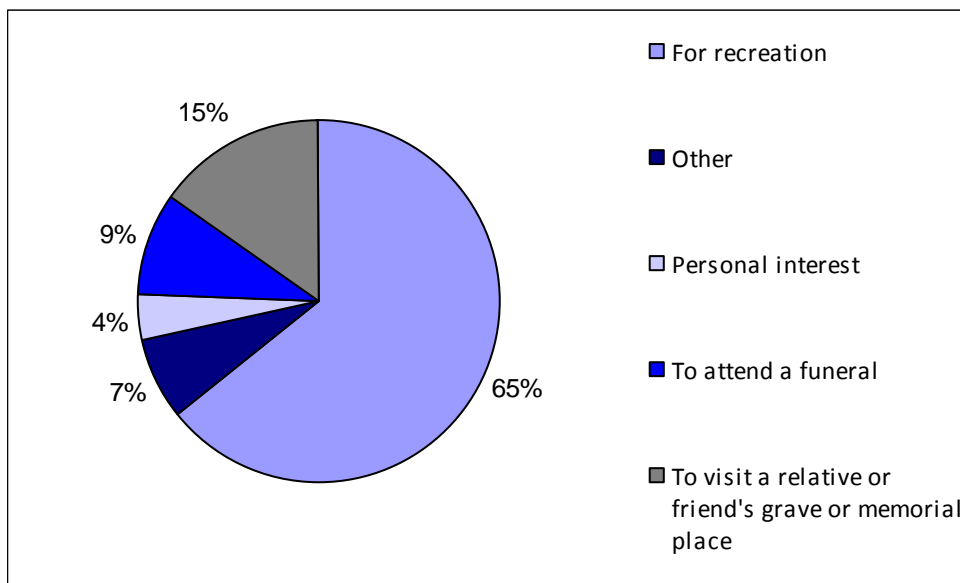
- 5.2 A total of 942 questionnaires were completed.
- 678 responses were made via the online survey
 - 264 paper copies of the questionnaires were received.

Q1: How often do you visit the cemeteries or crematoria in Southwark?



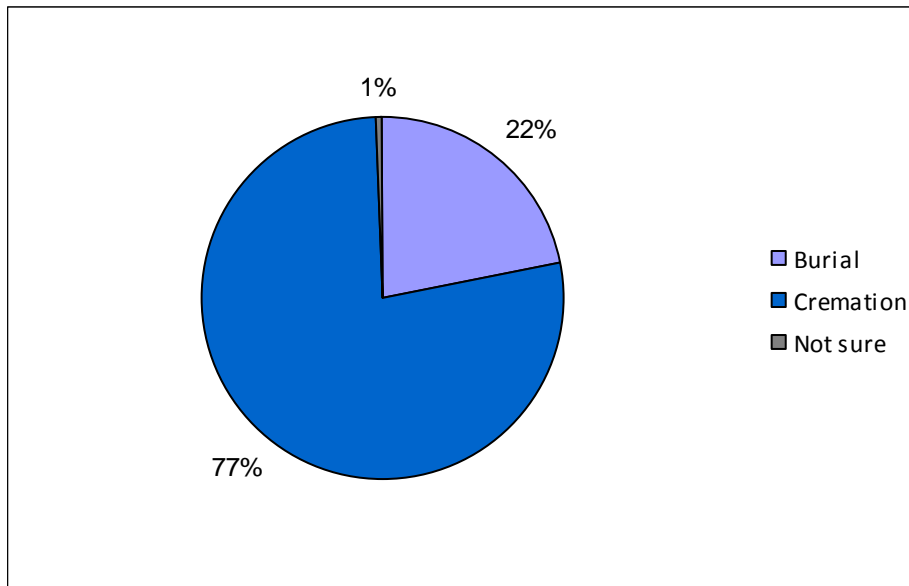
5.3 A 'never' category was added as people used the 'other' section to state that they didn't visit at all.

Q2: Could you tell us the reason for your visit?



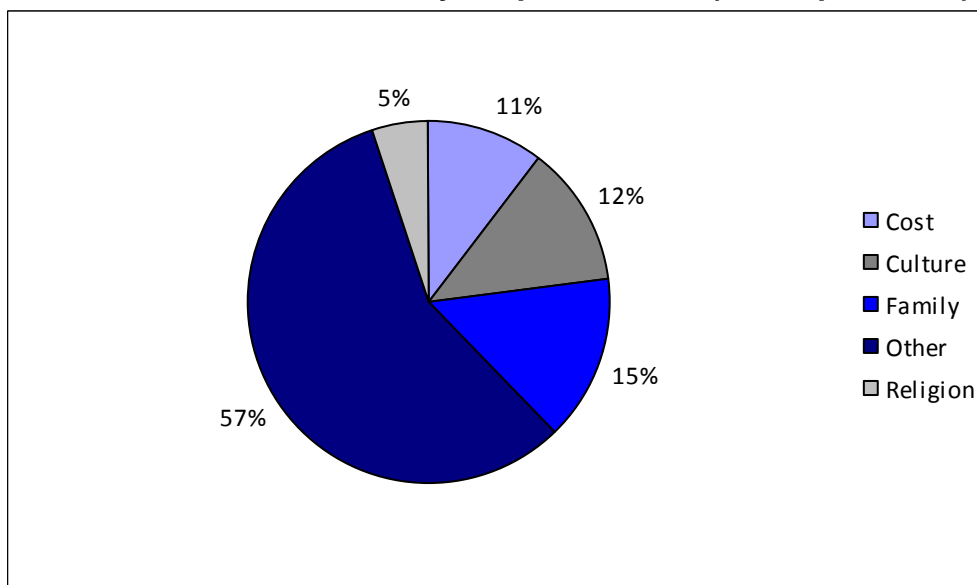
- 5.4 The largest majority of survey respondents visited the cemeteries and crematoriums for recreation. (65%) This was followed by visiting a relative or friend's grave or memorial plaque
- 5.5 Analysis of 'other' reasons indicated the most common were 'passing through' and conducting funerals.

Q3. Do you have a preference for burial or cremation?



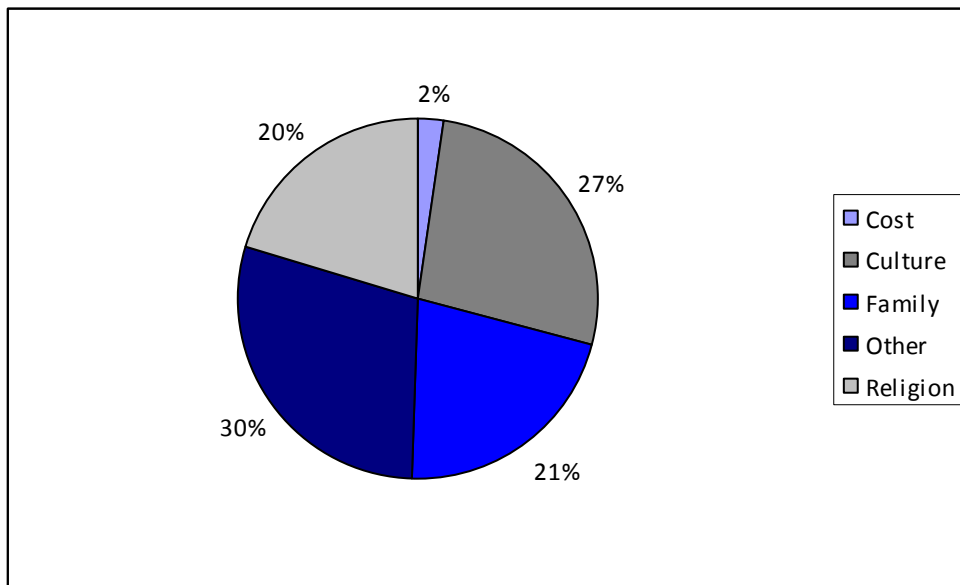
- 5.6 The majority of respondents (77%) stated a preference for cremation.
- 5.7 22% of respondents cited burial as their choice.
- 5.8 These figures vary from the national average which estimates that approx 70% of UK residents favour cremation and 30% favour burial.

Q3a: What is the reason for your preference? (All respondents)



- 5.9 The most common response on reasons for decisions to bury was 'other' (see later breakdown of 'other' reasons).

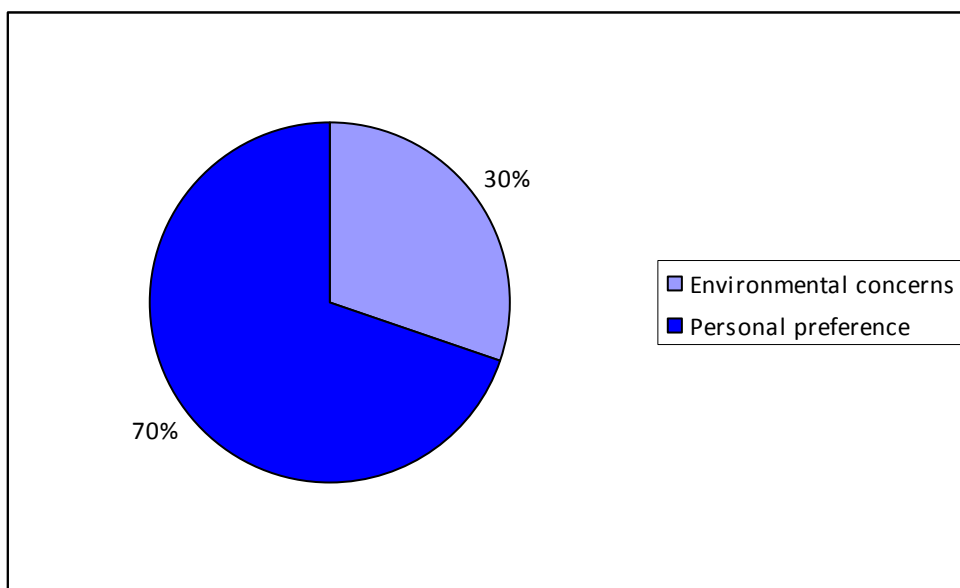
Reasons cited by those preferring burial



(Base=182)

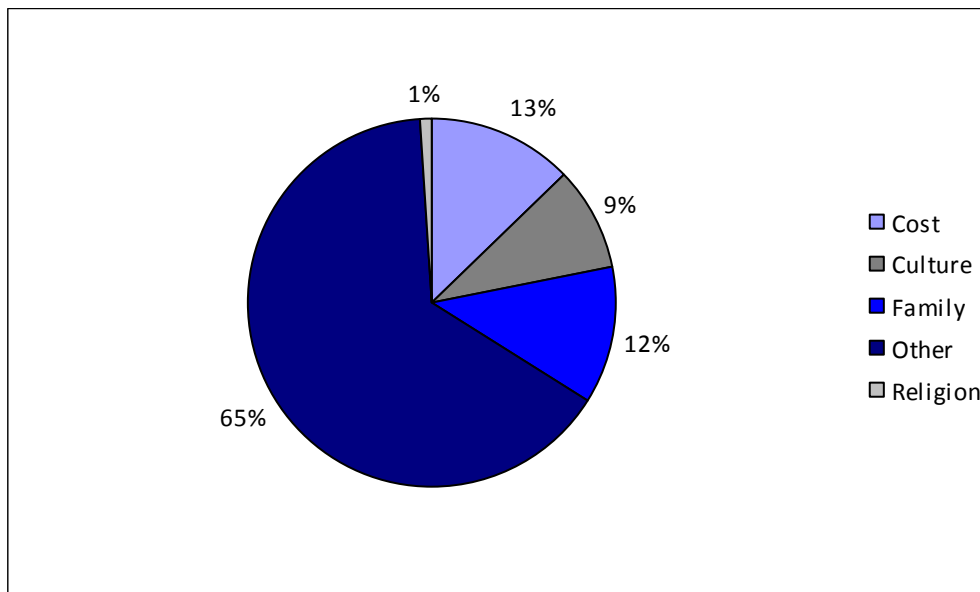
5.10 Religion culture and family tradition were the predominant factors Other reasons could generally be categorised into personal preference and environmental concerns.(see below)

Breakdown of 'other' reasons from those choosing burial as a preference



5.11 Personal preference rated most highly though a significant number of respondents expressed environmental concerns as a reason for their choice. For example one respondent commented:
'Eco burial on unconsecrated ground is the most environmentally friendly option'

Reasons given by those preferring cremation

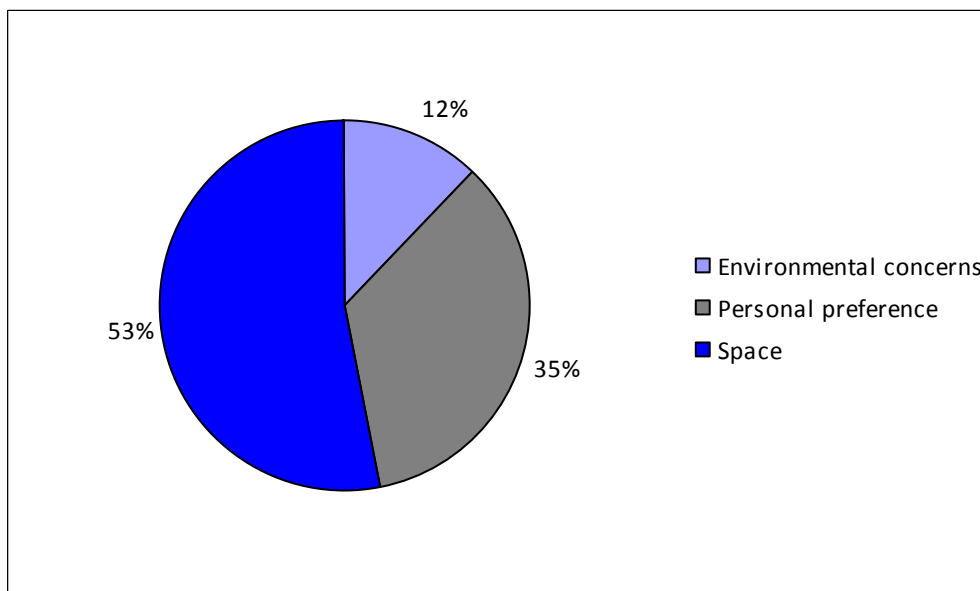


(Base= 724)

5.12 'Other' reasons were the largest choice by a significant margin (see further breakdown below)

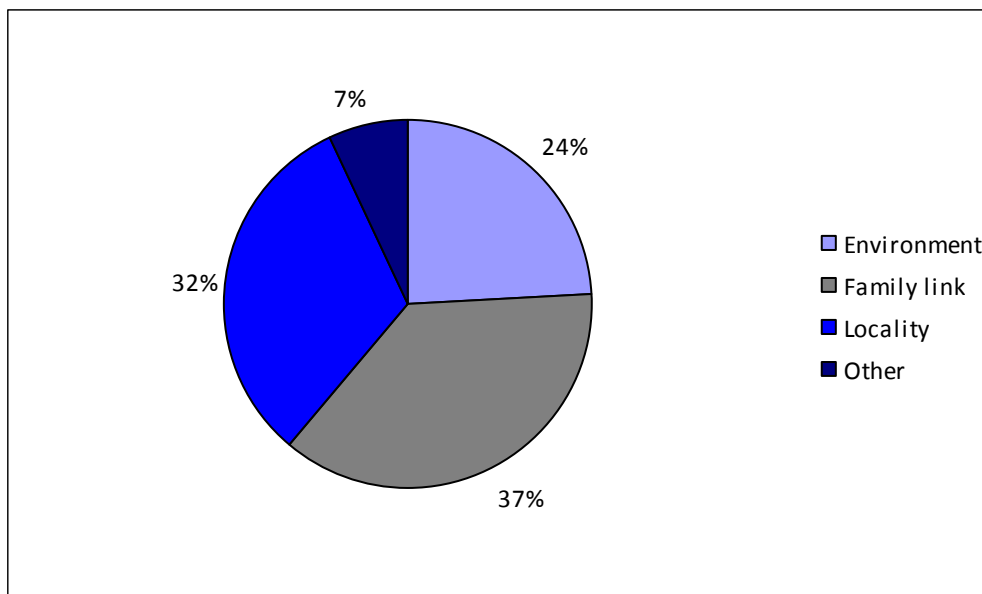
5.13 Religion had the least impact on people's preference for cremation
 Similar numbers of survey respondents selected culture, family and cost as the reasons for their choice.

'Other' reasons given by those choosing cremation



5.14 Lack of available space was cited as a principle 'other' reason for those choosing cremation.
 Two examples of comments received in support of cremation as a choice are:
'For environmental reasons and to preserve green spaces'
'Cremation takes up less space and is the most practical, modern option'

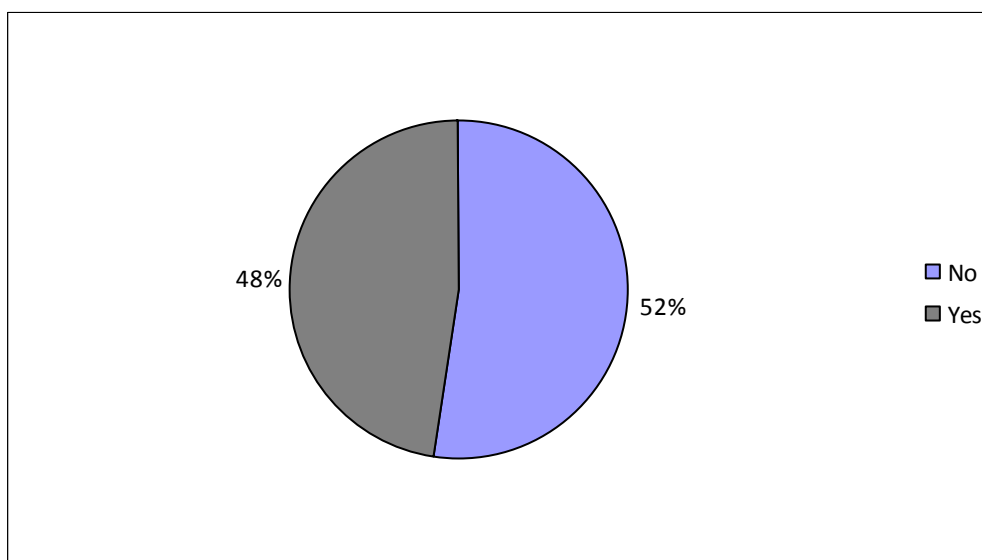
Q4: If you have chosen burial as a preference would you mind letting us know what would be important to you when selecting a cemetery plot



(Base=198)

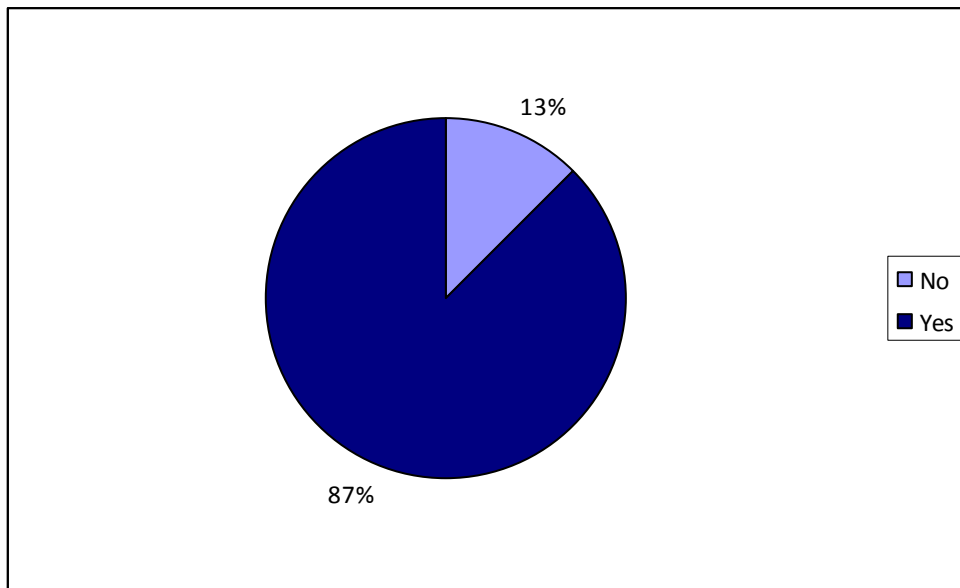
5.15 Family links were the most important criteria for people when selecting a cemetery plot. This was followed in importance by locality.

Q5: Do you feel it's important for Southwark Council to continue to provide burial space for its residents?



5.16 A slight majority of respondents (52%), did not feel that it was important for Southwark Council to continue to provide burial

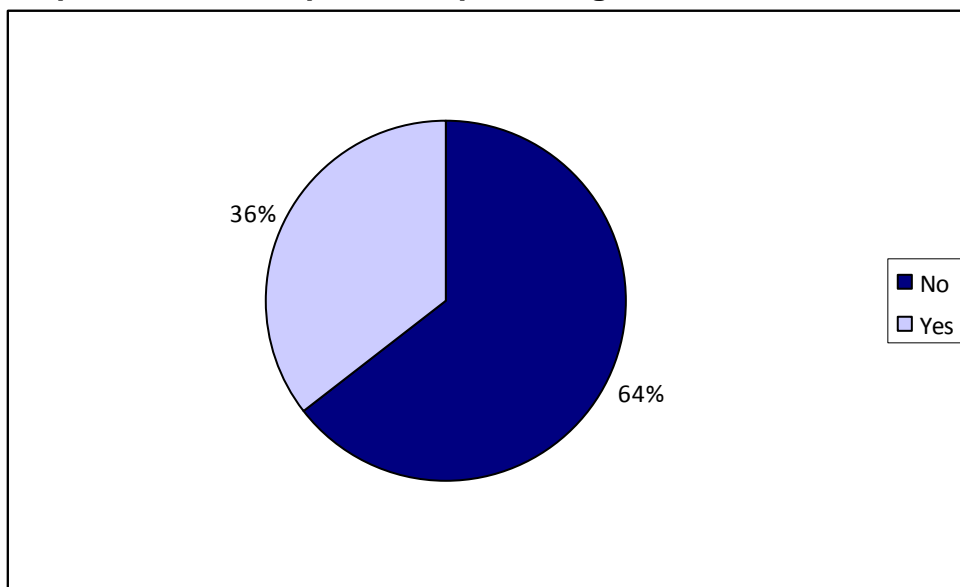
Response by those in favour of burial



5.17 The majority (87%) of respondents citing burial as their option thought it important for Southwark to continue its burial provision.

5.18 This indicates that there is a clear expectation from those requiring burial that Southwark Council should continue to provide this service

Responses from respondents preferring cremation



5.19 Amongst those choosing cremation, Southwark's burial provision is less clearly less valued, but still over a third consider it important.

Q5: Comments

5.20 A total of 474 comments were recorded in response to question 5. These included 164 comments from those who felt burial provision was important and 314 comments from those who didn't. Example comments are listed below.

From those who said it was important that Southwark should continue to provide burial space:

- ***'But not at the expense of using the recreation ground.'***

23 comments in total reflected this sentiment, indicating the lack of support for using Honor Oak Recreation ground for future burial

- ***'For many people visiting a burial site is part of the grieving process'.***

This was the theme of a further 10 people's comments. It was felt that being able to visit the graveside of a loved one gave comfort.

- ***'I think it would be unfair, unethical and distressing to dictate that people must be cremated if they have very strong feelings to be buried.'***

Being offered choice was a key theme in a further 12 people's comments

- ***'It is an important historic choice which allows for preference based upon both religious beliefs and family traditions'***

The importance of family tradition featured as a theme in 32 individual comments.

- ***'As a church minister, I have been conducting many funerals over the last 45 years and I know that a great number of people would be horrified if burials were to stop. The bible recommends burial and says nothing in favour of cremation.'***

Faith and culture featured as the predominant key theme in people's comments about continuing burial space with 36 comments.

Comments from those who feel that Southwark should not continue to provide burial space:

- ***'If everyone in Southwark wanted to be buried in Southwark we would run out of space in no time at all. It's not practical.'***

Lack of available space in the Borough for burial was a key theme in 69 people's comments

- ***'We need open spaces for people to use for sport & recreation. There is enough of a problem with obesity for example and the associated costs to the area without making the situation worse by removing recreation space for people to exercise'.***

45 comments related to the need to use available space for sport and recreation. 39 of these cited their opposition to the use of Honor Oak Recreation ground for burial

Q5 - Importance of continuing to provide burial - analysed by postcode areas

	SE15	SE23	SE1	SE16
Southwark providing burial is important	87 (63%)	197 (38%)	10 (90%)	12 (80%)
Southwark providing burial is NOT important	52 (37%)	318 (61%)	1 (10%)	3 (20%)
	SE22	SE4	SE5	SE17
Southwark providing burial is important	43 (64%)	36 (36%)	10 (77%)	12 (86%)
Southwark providing burial is NOT important	24 (36%)	65 (64%)	3 (33%)	2 (14%)

5.21 Cross referencing responses within postcodes reveals that in most parts of the Borough there is a majority who feel that the council's burial provision is important.

5.22 Two postcodes(SE23 and SE4 stand out with 61% and 64% respectively feeling that it is not important for Southwark Council to provide burial space.

Is burial provision important?

Respondents in different boroughs

	Lewisham		Southwark	
No	352	76%	198	50%
Yes	110	24%	196	50%

5.23 Residents in Lewisham were more likely to think that that it was not important for Southwark council to continue to provide burial.

5.24 Comments received in support of people's choices indicated that some of those who have lived all their lives in Southwark perceive the option of burial to be a right. Many respondents supporting burial also have family members buried in the borough.

Rating the options

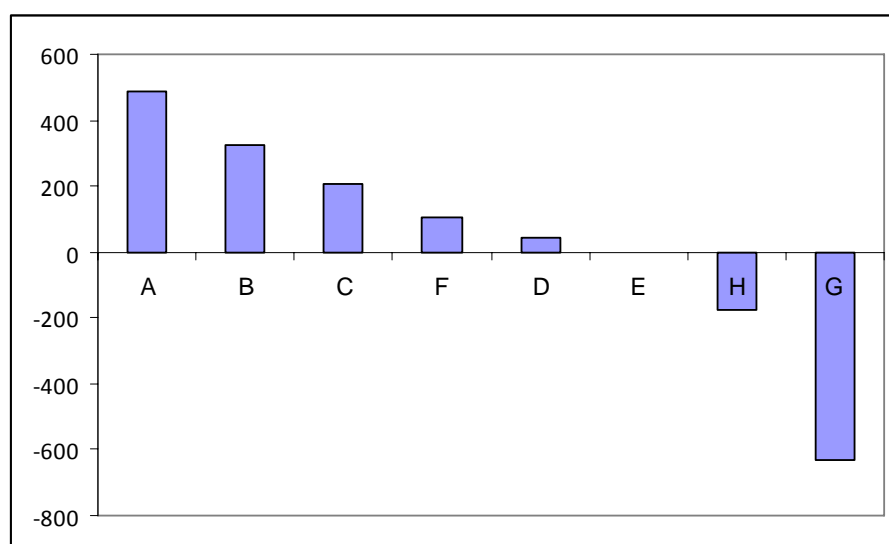
Q6: Please rate the following options in order of those you feel most appropriate for the future of burials in the borough?

Participants were asked to rank the following options:

- A - Re-use of common graves
- B - Re-use of private graves
- C - Use of burial chambers
- D - Finding a burial site outside of Southwark
- E - Share a cemetery elsewhere or buy graves from a private supplier
- F - Work with other local authorities
- G - Use some or all of Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burials
- H - Stop burying in Southwark

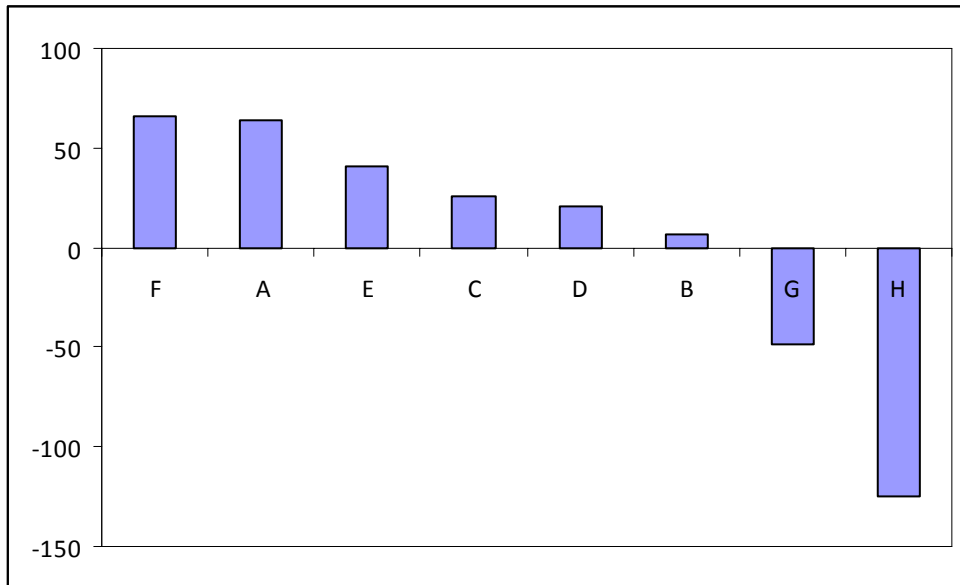
5.25 This involved rating each option from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most preferable and 8 being the least favoured option. To get an overall feel for the popularity of the options, adding the number of people giving an option 1 to 4 and subtracting the number that ranked it 5 to 8 calculates a net support score.

Overall Net Support Results



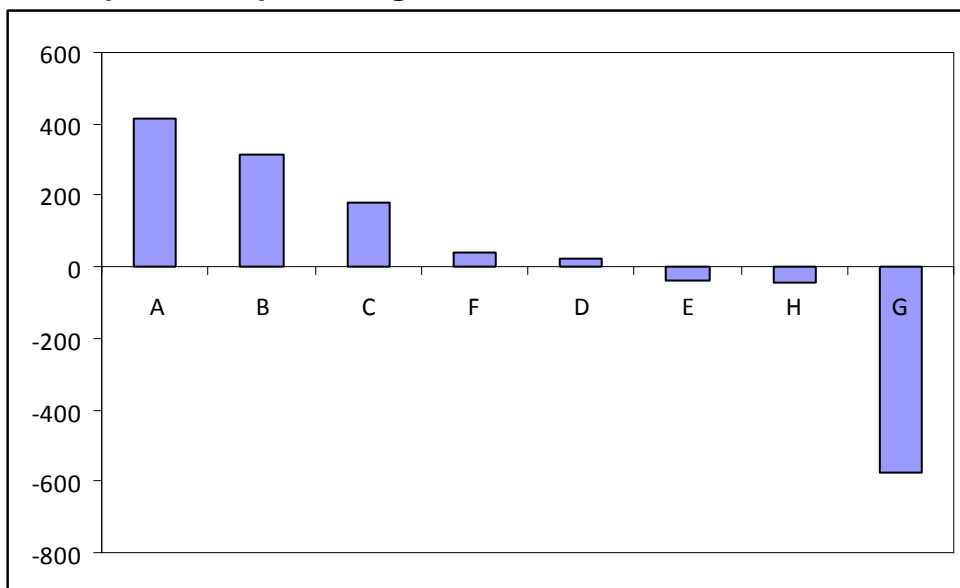
5.26 The net support illustration above shows A (re use of common graves) was the most popular choice overall, with G (using some or all of Honor Oak Recreation Ground) having the least support.

Respondents who prefer burial



5.27 This net support score for respondents who selected burial are shown. Here options H (stop burying in Southwark) and B (re- use of private graves) have become significantly less popular. Option E (share a cemetery elsewhere or buy graves from a private supplier) and F work with other local authorities to source shared land for new cemeteries), have become more popular.

Respondents preferring cremation



5.28 Then isolating the responses of those who favoured cremation there is less movement. However option H (stop burying in Southwark) becomes more acceptable and E becomes less popular. There remains a high level of support for re-using common and private graves.

A full table showing the numbers of respondents selecting 1 to 8 for all the options is shown below:

A		B		C		D	
1	378	1	126	1	124	1	107
2	157	2	262	2	63	2	72
3	70	3	136	3	205	3	98
4	65	4	61	4	132	4	168
5	51	5	67	5	104	5	137
6	56	6	69	6	115	6	146
7	34	7	75	7	66	7	86
8	44	8	49	8	30	8	35
E		F		G		H	
1	96	1	152	1	77	1	241
2	82	2	94	2	10	2	11
3	102	3	95	3	12	3	32
4	142	4	133	4	13	4	51
5	174	5	133	5	10	5	50
6	147	6	125	6	10	6	57
7	70	7	80	7	55	7	249
8	31	8	30	8	666	8	153

Q6: Comments

5.29 A selection of comments that accompanied people's responses to Q6 are shown below. In total 502 comments were recorded.

- 51 comments related to the **re use of graves**, the favourite option.
'If you re use grave sites I feel it is very important to keep very detailed information on the prior memorial for historic purposes. If there is a marker these should be digitized and any information should be made available to historians or those interested.'
- Suggestion was made that if graves were re- used then records would need to be kept and possibly new memorials created. It was felt that it would be imperative to make sure everything was done to ensure families were contacted in advance.
- **'Please keep Honor Oak Recreation ground as a recreation ground - such green space is essential for the enjoyment of family and social life and health.'**
216 comments in total reflected the sentiment above. This is a reflection of the groundswell of local opposition to the use of Honor Oak Recreation Ground as burial space.
- **'I think generally that land should be used for the living'**
This was a theme of 46 comments, in addition to the comments specifically related to Honor Oak.

- 'Burial chambers sound about the best. I'm not in agreement with digging up remains just to replace them. How can that be right? Those people bought there plots in perpetuity. How can there be any point in burial if the remains are going to be removed at a later date.'***

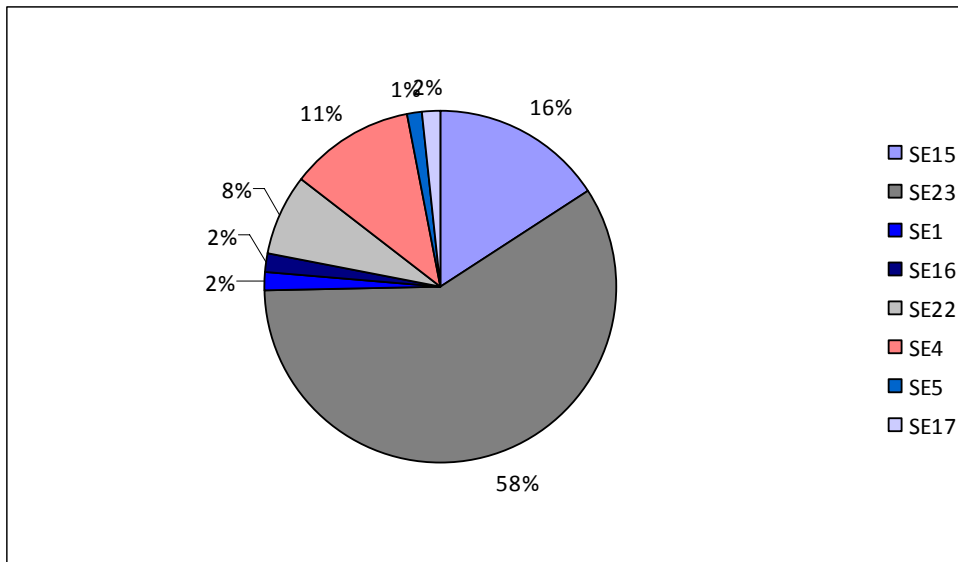
Nine people commented that they would be in favour of burial chambers.
- 'I don't think people when bereaved will feel like travelling far out of borough to bury their loved ones'***

This comment reflected one of 10 comments relating to burials outside Southwark. Although most of these were in favour of burials outside the borough there were reservations from others regarding the difficulties the elderly or those at economic disadvantage might face.
- 'I happen to believe that a burial ground is every bit as important as a recreation ground'***

This sentiment was reflected in 14 individual comments. A number of people are in support of using Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burial as this was its original purpose. Some feel there is ample open space elsewhere in the vicinity of Honor Oak.
- It is most thoughtful and sensitive to canvass opinions on this issue- well done!***

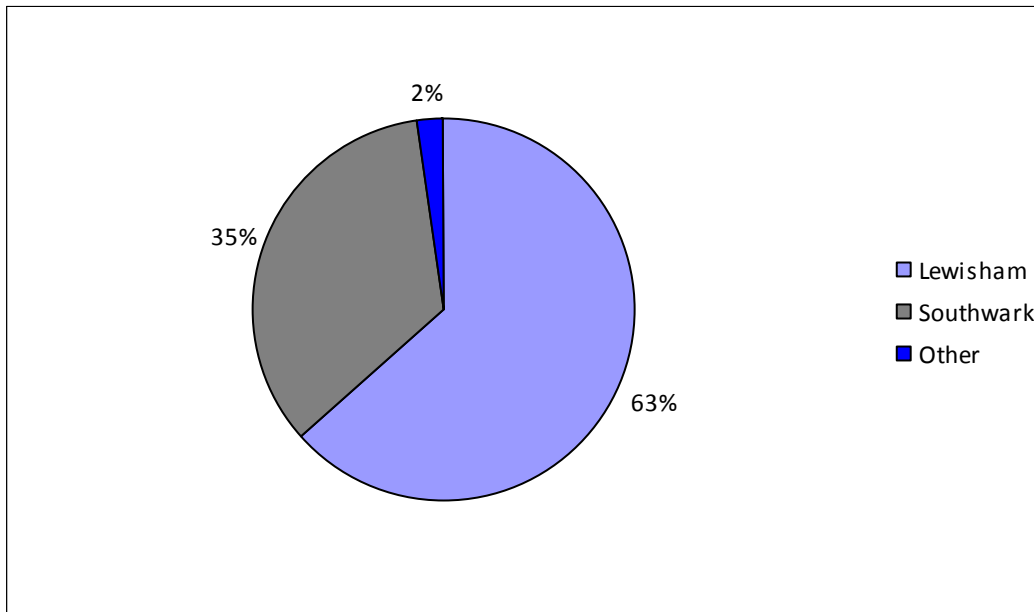
Q7: Information about respondents

Postcode



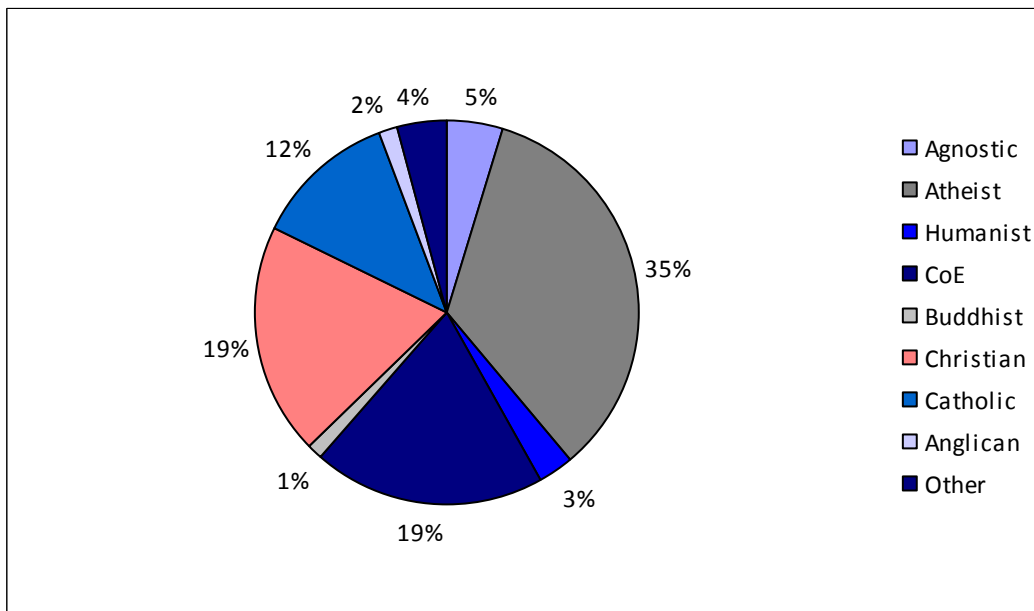
5.30 The majority of respondents live in SE23 with SE15 being the post code with the second highest number of responses.

Borough



5.31 The large majority of respondents were from Lewisham Borough, suggesting the survey is representative of the opinion of local people, to whom the questionnaire was distributed. It implies that it is not necessarily representative of Southwark residents overall.

Faith



6. Responses from Church Leaders

6.1 It was considered of value to analyse specific responses from Church leaders, those who play a key role in counselling bereaved families and conducting funeral services. Responses were received from Church representatives from the following denominations:

- Methodist Church
- Roman Catholic Church
- Evangelical Christian Church
- Pentecostal Church
- Baptist Church
- Anglican Church
- Humanist Faith

6.2 **Response from Methodist minister.**

- He did not feel that Southwark should continue burial.
- His first **option** was for the borough to **cease burial**.
- His least favourite option was for the use of Honor Oak Park

'Burial is a waste of precious land. I am totally opposed to using Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burials. Living people are far more important than dead ones'

6.3 **Response from Catholic priest (1)**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial
- His first **option** was **using Honor Oak for burial**.
- His least favourite option was for Southwark to cease burial.

'Burial is a long standing tradition .It respects religious and cultural traditions of some individuals and groups'

6.4 **Response from Catholic priest (2)**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial
- His favoured option was **using Honor Oak for burial**.
- His least favourite option was for Southwark to cease burial.

'Land that was originally earmarked for burial should have been used for burial. Land lent for park or sport should be given back. At the time it was realised that extra land at Honor Oak would be needed in the future'

6.5 **Response from Catholic priest (3)**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial
- His favoured option was **working with other local authorities to source shared land for new cemeteries**.
- His least favourite option was for Southwark to cease burial.

6.6 **Response from Catholic priest (4)**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial
- His favoured option was **re- use of common graves**
- His least favourite option was for Southwark to cease burial.

'The Freemasons introduced cremation to France in the late 1700's to ridicule the Christian belief of the resurrection, so in the Catholic Church it was forbidden. In 1971 Pope Paul 6th removed the prohibition because 1)to ensure that people cremated are not subjected to ridicule and 2) the shortage of space in the city cemeteries was beginning to be felt, as it is now'

6.7 **Response from Evangelical Church Minister**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial.
- His favoured option was **using Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burial.**
- His least favoured option was sharing a cemetery elsewhere.

‘As a Church minister I have been conducting many funerals over the last 45 years (many at Brenchley Gardens) and I know that a great number of people would be horrified if burials were to stop .The bible recommends burials and says nothing in favour of cremation, so for those with Christian beliefs that would make burial the most acceptable’.

6.8 **Response from Pentecostal Reverend**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial.
- His favoured option was **using Honor Oak Recreation ground.**
- His least favoured option was re- use of graves.

‘Use some of Honor Oak Recreation Ground so that burials can continue in the Borough’

6.9 **Response from Baptist Minister**

- He felt that Southwark should continue burial.
- His favoured option was **reuse of graves.**
- His least favourite was stopping burial in Southwark.

‘Although I am personally happy to be cremated a number of people within my church community would strongly prefer burial’s feel that it is important that Southwark continues to provide burial space for its residents.’

6.10 **Response from Anglican priest (1)**

- He felt that Southwark should not continue with burial.
- His favoured options were **reuse of common graves and use of Honor Oak**
- His least favoured option was finding a burial site outside Southwark.

‘If the council is to continue providing space – a) the recreation ground was originally purchased and should be the primary option as should be reusing long unused graves .After this there should be no more pressure on the Council to provide burial space’

6.11 **Response from Anglican priest (2)**

- He felt that Southwark should continue with burial.
- His favoured option was **reuse of common graves**
- His least favoured option was for Southwark to stop burying.

‘Southwark should continue to provide burial space as it is an important historic choice which allows for preferences for both religious and family traditions’

6.12 **Response from Humanist Minister**

- She felt that Southwark should continue with burial but with limits relating to land use.
- Her favoured option was **reuse of common graves**.
- Her least favoured option was finding a site outside the Borough.

Comment:

- **Encourage cremation as the best option.**
- **cease to guarantee 'private' burial space**
- **use the Italian idea of above ground chambers**
- **Identify out on London green 'ecological sites**
- **The HOP play/recreation area is very valuable a site – PLEASE only annex part of for burial space.**

'People need to recognize the reality of the situation, i.e. not enough space for 'private' plots'

- 6.13 In summary of the eleven respondents nine considered it important that Southwark continued to provide burial, two did not agree. When asked to rate the eight options, six respondents selected 'stopping burial' as their least preferred option, options presented.
- 6.14 Five respondents were strongly in favour of using Honor Oak Recreation ground for future burials and chose it as their first option, citing that it was originally bought as burial space and should be used as such.
- 6.15 The responses varied amongst different denominations; though three were Roman Catholic (of a total of five Catholic priests) one respondent was strongly against the use of Honor Oak and chose this as their least preferred option.
- 6.16 Five respondents cited the re use of common graves as their first option, reflecting the Borough – wide opinion of respondents to the questionnaire.
- 6.17 The most popular choice was equally divided between the use of Honor Oak Recreation Ground and the re -use of graves. Only one respondent was opposed to the re use of graves and chose this as their least favourite option.

7. Consultation Meetings

- 7.1 A total of 170 people attended consultation meetings held throughout the period. These included
- Public meetings on Saturday 30th July and Saturday 24th September at Honor Oak Recreation Ground.
 - Public meeting at 160 Tooley Street, SE1
 - Funeral Directors
 - Southwark Muslim Forum
 - Southwark Pensioners Centre.
 - Meeting with Ryedale residents

The format of the meetings

- 7.2 Panel Members:
- Councillor Barrie Hargrove Cabinet member for Transport, Environment and Recycling
 - Rebecca Towers: Parks and Open Spaces Manager
 - Des Waters: Head of Public Realm
 - Avril Kirby – Cemetery & Crematorium Manager
 - Deborah McKenzie – Open Spaces Service Development
 - Facilitation provided by Sally Causer – consultant
- 7.3 At each meeting, Paul Harrison: Landscape Consultant and cemetery specialist provided an overview of the options considered to date.
- 7.4 Following the background information and explanation of the options the public meetings were opened up to enable attendees to raise points and questions. Approximately 1.5 hours was allowed for this open session at each of the larger public meetings.
- 7.5 Consultation questionnaires were circulated at each meeting.
- 7.6 Panel presentations provided background information and explained the context for the consultation:
- There are approximately 380 burials per year, 210 of these being purchases of new plots.
 - The ratio of burials to cremations is 30:70 this reflects national figures and appears to be staying fairly stable.
 - Southwark has a diverse and increasing population, including the Muslim community, who choose burial for religious reasons.
 - In the past, over successive administrations there has been underinvestment in the Southwark cemeteries and the Council is committed to improving this situation.
 - The Cabinet recently took the difficult decision to increase fees for burial and cremation in Southwark, which have been substantially lower than in other London Boroughs.
 - The situation in Southwark is not unique. Neighbouring boroughs will face the same issues in future years and there is a sense that people are looking to Southwark to see what solutions are found.

Summary of key issues arising at meetings

7.7 ***Retaining Burial in Southwark***

Reasons given in favour:

- The cost for families. Many disadvantaged families in the Borough on low income, and to be buried outside the Borough would cost in the region of 3 times as much.
- Emotional attachment to the Borough. People spoke about relatives including children who were buried in the Southwark Cemeteries and the wish to be buried close to loved ones
- Cost and difficulty of travelling to visit the grave, especially for older residents
- The cemeteries would still need to be maintained. Less staff would mean there would be a security issue. It was noted at a public meeting that the Honor Oak recreation ground had to be locked overnight. This is to prevent incidents such as lead being stolen from roofs of buildings.
- Southwark has historic cemeteries, with a diversity of wildlife. It was felt that the heritage and environment needed to be protected and improved.
- Loss of revenue and the cost of maintaining would mean that the cemeteries would start to run at a loss within about 3 years, costing council tax payers more. The cemetery service is at the moment able to cover their costs.
- Religious and cultural reasons: There are equality issues in removing a choice that would particularly affect specific faith cultural groups.

Alternative views

- At the Honor Oak public meetings some people expressed the view that in inner city areas it was no longer possible to offer burial as an option using the slogan 'The land is for the living'. It was pointed out that cemeteries are also an important facility for the bereaved, and for people to visit to enjoy the heritage and wildlife.
- It was suggested that the cost of burial should be increased to encourage cremation.
- There was some debate about the environmental friendliness of cremation. A popular view was that continuing to bury was not sustainable

7.8 ***Use of the Honor Oak Recreation Grounds***

The majority of people attending the public meetings at Honor Oak Park expressed the view that they wished to preserve the recreation ground. Many of the attendees were local residents and people who use the recreation grounds for sport and dog walkers.

Reasons for not using the Honor Oak Recreation Ground for burial:

- There is a lack of open space in Lewisham and little other green space in the area that could be used for sports facilities. The Honor Oak site is well used by sports clubs, dog walkers and families using the playground. People felt that resources should be put in to improving the site.
- There were concerns that Southwark Council would choose this as the cheapest option.
- The cost benefit analysis of the health of young people, combating obesity, and youth crime should be considered. This includes the use of the playground.
- Additional pressure will be placed on Peckham Rye if the site is no longer available for sports use.
- There were concerns around drainage, and former use of land which may be contaminated or have underground tunnels
- People mentioned that Southwark Council had carried out a similar consultation 20 years ago. There were concerns that if a part of the site

was used now then in a few years time the council would be looking to take another portion, leaving no open space for local residents.

- It was felt that Southwark Council should consider an open space policy in relation to this consultation, and that decisions couldn't be made in isolation.
- Using the recreation ground would only last for 30 years... what then?
- The land was bought as a cemetery over 100 years ago and the use may longer be relevant.

Comments in favour of using Honor Oak Recreation Ground

- The land is owned by the Southwark Council already, and was purchased to be part of the cemetery
- It is a local and sustainable option The Mayor of London's plans encourage local use of land, rather than buying sites outside London.
- Using part of the open space could enable time to be spent on reclamation of graves on existing sites
- Most people who use the grounds are Lewisham residents yet it is Southwark taxpayers who pay for it.
- The recreation ground is surrounded by cemetery whereas other locations that will be used for burial are overlooked by people's homes causing them great distress.

7.9 Reuse of existing graves

- Overall at the meetings, this option seemed acceptable.
- Some people who had relatives buried in the existing cemeteries raised queries, but didn't express any strong views against the option once the process and legal position had been explained.
- Concerns were expressed about the proximity of burial to dwellings and how this impacts on house prices and also respect for mourners.
- It was suggested that there would be a market for more 'woodland' type burial (without memorials) that may allow for higher density burial. However the cemetery specialist highlighted that in the short to long term woodland burial generally provided lower density, to allow a more natural environment. There may however be some space that can be used for this and other forms of natural burial without memorial stones, such as meadow burial.
- Views were expressed that care would have to be taken in managing the environment, including trees.
- Concerns were raised about the use of path and walkways for burial in the cemetery.
- A suggestion was made about vertical rather than horizontal burial, but the advice was that this was not practical or possible at present and could in any case impact upon reuse of graves in the future.
- Some queried how the issue was being dealt with London-wide and were informed that the Ministry of Justice has carried out a review on the feasibility of re-using graves. The report concludes that decisions should lie with each Local Authority
- At the first Honor Oak public meeting, issues such as genealogy, and reuse of memorials were discussed. It was pointed out that some public graves also have memorials.
- Reuse of graves is a sustainable option long term, but it is difficult to know how much extra space this would allow and it will take some time to explore all the issues.

7.10 **Re-use of private graves**

- The reuse of private graves through use of faculty and or through legislative provision was considered more challenging.
- There is a technical challenge in that many existing graves are too small for modern burials due average size of people increasing and the popularity of American style caskets. This makes it difficult to follow the original layouts even if caskets are not permitted (as has been the case in some boroughs).
- It was commented that that if reuse was an option that enabled burial to continue then people would accept a ban on caskets.

7.11 **Above-ground burial**

- There were no strong views on this option.
- The option of Mausoleums would enable some space that is unsuitable for below ground burials because of drainage and other problems to be used. This provides a high density solution.
- There are some potential legal issues with removal of remains in the future which may cause issues with re-use of mausoleums in the longer term.
- Use would require a major cultural adjustment for many in the population. However many of the funeral directors we spoke to felt that the significantly large of Latin American and Portuguese communities in Southwark may find this culturally acceptable.
- Overall it was felt to be worth exploring but would only be part of a package of options.

7.12 **Purchasing a new site either alone or with other councils, or buying plots from a private cemetery**

- At the first public meeting concern was expressed about the cost of acquiring a new site when the council already owns the site at Honor Oak.
- The unfairness of expecting people (many of whom may be elderly) to travel to visit relative and friends graves outside of Southwark was highlighted.
- It was pointed out that people may be prepared to travel, and often do if a woodland burial had been chosen.
- It was felt that in some cases families had moved outside London to places like Kent and Essex and may wish to have relatives buried closer to where they live.
- People mentioned the historic train that ran from central London to Brookwood cemetery. It was pointed out that this cemetery eventually closed, because it wasn't sustainable.
- There was a concern that private cemeteries might only be sustainable for about 30- 40 years and then firms may find they are no longer profitable, leading to closure.
- It was felt that exploring the use of former arable land outside London, to offer the option of woodland burial could be incorporated into plans.

7.13 **Other Comments**

- A query was raised about Southwark Council's apparent delay in implementing the short term plans for using site A. It has been 3 months since decisions were taken.

- It was explained that work was being carried out to test the drainage and quality of the soil, but assurances were given that this was progressing.
- Queries were raised about the areas on which there had been illegal dumping. There were differences of opinion on the extent, and site of this.
- Southwark is seen as the 'poor relative' in terms of facilities at cemeteries.
- People wondered why the costs had been kept low, which meant that people came from other Boroughs to be buried in Southwark because it was cheaper.
- Prices have recently increased and as part of the consultation the council are asking cemetery users views on the facilities.
- Most of the people using Honor Oak Recreation Ground are Lewisham residents, yet it is Southwark taxpayer's money that maintains it. Surely it's their opinion that should count.
- Southwark Council also want to hear the views of Lewisham residents and are not adopting a 'closed border' approach.

7.14 The main points from the meeting with Southwark Muslim Forum

- The representatives welcomed the fact that Southwark Council were consulting with the Muslim Community and stated that they would feed back the information to their members.
- There are different interpretations of Sharia Law on burial rites, and some people do not adhere as strictly as others to the requirements.
- Burial is however an absolute necessity for Muslims.
- If burial was not offered in Southwark the Muslim community would have to seek space in other boroughs.
- The representatives felt that there would be a serious equality impact if Southwark council ceased its burial provision
- The representatives saw this meeting as the beginning of a process of dialogue and asked that they be kept informed of developments.

7.15 Main points from Pensioners Centre meeting

- Concerns about the upkeep of relatives graves.
- One attendee spoke about the importance to her of being able to visit her son's grave in Camberwell New Cemetery and wanting to be buried in the same cemetery.
- Nunhead was recognised as an important environmental and historic site.
- One attendee was not in favour of maintaining burial, stating that land was at a premium in London and open spaces should be protected. She felt that burial should be made much more expensive to make people choose cremation.

8. Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground

- 8.1. The recreation ground, immediately adjacent to Camberwell New Cemetery, with whom it shares an entrance, was originally purchased in 1901 by Southwark Council for use as a burial ground, since then it has not been used for that purpose but as a public open space.
- 8.2. There is a children's playground on the northern side of the open space and a landscaped dog free recreation area on the southern side as well as two ball courts (including a tennis court) The children's playground contains conventional equipment including swings, climbing frames, slides and a roundabout. The tarmac surface in the playground is in poor condition in places, presenting trip hazards. It is possible that the roundabout is of an out of date design. It is recommended that the playground is inspected in the near future.
- 8.3. The Recreation Ground is within easy walking distance of the heavily populated area at Honor Oak. There would appear to be a large number of young families living in this area.
- 8.4. The possible future use of Honor Oak Recreation Ground as a burial space has proved a highly emotive issue for a large number of local residents, with many citing reasons similar or identical to those listed above as their reasons for wanting to retain the area as green space.
- 8.5. There has been a campaign since February 2011 led by the Friends of Honor Oak Park to try and stop any development of Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground. The Friends have raised a petition containing over 2000 signatures opposing the development. Flyers and posters were distributed and displayed and the petition was made available in shops and restaurants in the Honor Oak area as well on - line. The Friends devised a slogan stating 'Our future is LOCAL. Land is for the Living'
- 8.6. The Friends Group have a wide range of objections to the future use of the open space for burial ground which they expressed at the two public meetings held. The details of which are summarised in chapter 7 of this report.
- 8.7. There has been considerable media coverage for the Friends campaign, which also highlighted the difficulties the council has been faced with when finding a solution to the problem of future burial. BBC London covered the issue in February, as did BBC Radio 4. Coverage was also made of the issue in the Times newspaper as well as the local South London Press.
- 8.8. In addition to their campaign for signatures opposing use of the open space for burial the Friends Group also urged members to complete questionnaires on the council web site in a tactical manner to ensure their desired result was achieved. Some results this could imply that this particular campaign was somewhat successful
- 8.9. To ensure that a sound decision regarding the use of the open space was reached Southwark Council commissioned a series of head count surveys of the open space to ascertain the level of its use. CABE recommend the use of head counts as a mechanism to help ascertain visitor usage and thus determine the value of the green space to users.

9. Honor Oak Recreation Ground - Head Count Survey Results

9.1 Visitor count surveys that helped identify the number of people using the open space as well as ascertaining the types of activity they were involved in were undertaken at Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground at the following dates and times:

- Wednesday May 25th from 1pm – 6pm (afternoon school term- time)
- Friday June 3rd from 10am to 6pm (full day school holidays)
- Sunday June 5th from 10 am to 6pm (full day weekend)
- Friday June 10th from 10am to 1pm (morning school term - time)
- Friday September 9th from 3pm to 6pm (after school)
- Saturday September 10th from 10am to 6pm (full weekend day in the football season)
- Sunday September 11th from 10 am to 6pm (full weekend day in the football season)
- Wednesday September 14th from 3pm to 6pm (after school)

9.2 The survey collected the following information about both children and adults and included those taking part in:

- Informal games
- organised sport
- cycling
- walking
- dog walking
- playing in the playground

9.3 The following is a simplified breakdown of the results of the head counts.

9.4 Visitor numbers at Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground during the survey period.

Date	Hours	School term or holidays	Weekday or weekend	Numbers
Wednesday 25 th May	5	School term	Weekday	386
Friday 3 rd June	8	Holidays	Weekday	533
Friday 9 th September	3	School term	Weekday (after school)	173
Weds 14 th September	3	School term	Weekday (after school)	183
Weekday Totals	19			1275
Sunday 5 th June	8	School term	Weekend	216
Sat 10 th September	8	School term	Weekend	587
Sun 11 th September	8	School term	Weekend	388
Sun 18 th September	8	School term	Weekend	509
Weekend Totals	32			1700

9.5 By employing the standard formula used by the council for parks visitor counting an estimate for annual visitors can be reached.

9.6 The formula

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Weekday Count:} & \quad \text{Total Visitors/total no. of hrs} \times 12\text{hr} \times 261 \text{ days} \\ \text{Weekend Count:} & \quad + \frac{\text{Total Visitors/total no. of hrs} \times 12\text{hr} \times 104 \text{ days}}{2} \\ & = \text{Estimated visitor numbers per annum} \end{aligned}$$

9.7 Using the figures from Honor Oak Recreation Ground:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Weekday} & \quad 1275/19 \times 12 \times 261 & = 210,174 \\ \text{Weekend} & \quad 1700/32 \times 12 \times 104 & = \underline{66,300} \\ \text{Total per annum} & & \quad \quad \quad \underline{276,474} \end{aligned}$$

9.8 Therefore the study suggests an estimate of 276,474 visitors to the recreation ground per year.

9.9 The table below shows comparative data from other open spaces surveyed in Southwark in recent years.

Park Name	Size in Hectares	Average visitors per year
Southwark Park	26.8	1,008,765
Peckham Rye Park	39.7	805,185
Goose Green	15	300,000
Honor Oak Rec	4.3	276,474
Paterson Park	1.8	270,396
Sunray Gardens	1.5	256,563

9.10 The comparison shows that whilst visitor numbers at Honor Oak Recreation Ground may appear high, it is not significantly higher than some of the borough's much smaller parks.

9.11 Paterson Park for example is less than half the size of Honor Oak Recreation but attracts similar numbers of visitors.

9.12 It is widely acknowledged that small local parks tend to attract disproportionately high visitor numbers per hectare.

9.13 The comparison with other much smaller open spaces suggests that a reduction in the size of Honor Oak would not necessarily detract from its capacity to provide sport, leisure and recreation to its users.

9.14 Use of the space is concentrated around a number of sports and play facilities.

- 9.15 The table below gives a breakdown, by percentage of the different activities visitors to the open space were engaged in during the survey period.

Activity	No.	% of users
Using the playground	928	31%
Walking	774	26%
Dog walking	413	14%
'Other' activities (spectating, picnicking, kite flying, skateboarding.	293	10%
Organised sport – mainly junior football	283	9%
Cycling	155	5.25%
Informal games, inc tennis, cricket and rounders	129	4.75%

- 9.16 **The children's playground** appears to be regularly used. One fine Sunday saw a total of 137 users during the day. There is a wide range of play equipment and most users spent between 40 and 60 mins in the playground.
- 9.17 Parents and carers of under 5's make use of the playground at all times of day, between 10am and 12pm being the busiest time. During school holidays the playground is busy all day. At weekends the playground is also busy at all times of day with a wide range of ages using it (including teenagers in small numbers).
- 9.18 The playground appears to be a popular meeting place for parents and carers. Fathers and their young children were most evident on Sunday mornings. The multicultural demographic of the area was evident during the survey period by the range of languages heard.
- 9.19 **Sport:** The recreation ground is used by football clubs, playing both five a side and full games on Saturday and Sunday mornings during the football season. A number of spectators as well as players were observed on each occasion the survey was undertaken.
- 9.20 **Informal games:** Informal games were also observed during the survey period, including tennis and basket ball, in the courts on the east side of the recreation ground.
- 9.21 Games such as cricket, rounders and other informal games were observed daily.
- 9.22 **Cycling:** Cyclists were observed using the perimeter of the recreation ground, presumably as an access route.
- 9.23 **Walking:** Overall this appeared to be one of the most popular activities on the recreation ground. Many parents/carers with babies and very young children in buggies (too young to enjoy the playground) seemed to enjoy strolling around the open space. People of all ages were observed, including older people. Some were clearly using the space as an access route but many just enjoying it for recreational walking. On a fine Saturday in September 90 people were observed walking for recreation.
- 9.24 **Dog walking:** popular activity with users of the recreation ground. Dog walkers are particularly evident between 11am and 12pm and 3pm and 4pm, although they can be observed at most times of the day. 59 dog walkers were observed on a fine Saturday during September.

- 9.25 Unsurprisingly the highest number of users was recorded during a half term school holiday in June, followed by a Sunday morning between 10am and 12pm in September, during the football season.
- 9.26 In common with most local parks, Honor Oak Park Recreation Ground is used by a wide range of people within the local community. The responses received to the questionnaire reflect the great attachment local people have to their local park.
- 9.27 The campaign by the Friends Group to ensure the park is not lost as a burial ground is reflective of the strength of feeling people in the local area have towards the space.