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LAND ADJACENT ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, HAUGHTON

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Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Chris McEwan  
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director - Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

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SUMMARY REPORT

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To consider a proposal by the Haughton Residents Association and St Andrew's Church to create a Memorial Garden and car parking on the former St Andrew's School site, Haughton Road.

**Summary**

2. Haughton Residents Association and St Andrew's Church identified the need to create a Memorial Garden and have for the past few years been exploring the possibility of creating a Memorial Garden and car parking on the Council's land adjacent to St Andrew's Church, formerly St Andrew's School shown on the attached plan as **Appendix 1**.
3. Working through Groundwork North East, a scheme for the land has been designed, attached as **Appendix 2** and an application for 'Community Spaces' funding from the Big Lottery Fund is being progressed.
4. Although still at an early stage in the funding application process, one of the funding criteria is that the applicant requires the 'landowners permission' confirming that the landowner agrees with the planned project and is willing to permit the required level of public access for the asset monitoring period, in this case five years.
5. If successful in securing grant funding the Haughton Residents Association and St Andrew's Church would like to enter into an agreement for the use and maintenance of the land and discuss how the works can be best procured.
6. As part of the grant process an application for planning permission to change the use of the land has recently been submitted by Groundwork North East, as agents for the Residents Association and St Andrew's Church.

## **Recommendation**

7. It is recommended that :-

- (a) The proposal to create a Memorial Garden and car parking on Council land adjacent to St Andrew's Church, Haughton, as outlined in the report be approved in principle.
- (b) The proposer's application for planning permission and for Community Spaces funding be recognised and their request for the 'landowner's permission' form to be signed, agreed.
- (c) Subject to planning permission and funding being obtained the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources, be authorised to negotiate and agree terms for the use of the land.
- (d) The Borough Solicitor be authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation.

## **Reasons**

8. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) To support an application for grant funding for a Residents Association project on Council land.
- (b) To enable an area of Council land to be improved for the benefit of the local residents.

**Paul Wildsmith**  
**Director of Corporate Services**

## **Background Papers**

Papers provided by Groundwork North East

Guy Metcalfe : Extension 2735  
BAH

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues relating to Crime and Disorder which this report needs to address.
Health and Well Being	The works identified in the report for which funding is required will make a positive contribution to Health and Well Being.
Sustainability	There are no issues relating to Sustainability which this report needs to address.
Diversity	The works identified in the report for which funding is required will make a positive contribution to Diversity.
Wards Affected	Haughton West.
Groups Affected	The group affected are the Haughton Residents Association and the Parishioners of St Andrews Church.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report does not adversely impact on the Strategy.
Efficiency	Undertaking the proposed works will reduce the need for grounds maintenance by the Council leading to efficiencies in staff time and resources.

## MAIN REPORT

### Asset Management

9. Following the demolition and clearance of the former St Andrew's School, the site was soiled and seeded and has remained a grassed area adjacent to the Church and a green approach to Haughton Village.
10. However, maintenance of the area has proved problematic over the years and the proposed Memorial Garden should provide a real focal point and an area of high landscape quality.
11. The additional car parking being proposed should also relieve the congestion frequently caused on Salters Lane South and at the junction with Haughton Road when large funerals and weddings are being held at the Church.
12. The proximity and level of the site in relation to the nearby River Skerne and current planning policy has effectively limited the use of the site to that now being proposed. Alternative uses could include grazing for livestock but previous grazing arrangements proved difficult to manage and the level of rents achieved were not cost effective.
13. Access to the Council's retained land to the west and north of the proposed Memorial Garden will need to be maintained.
14. The advice received from a funding perspective is that it is easier for the grant application if the land stays in Council ownership and the Council sign a 'landowner's permission' form, effectively agreeing in principle to the proposed project.
15. Subject to funding the Residents Association and St Andrew's Church propose taking a lease of the land for a term to be agreed, minimum 5 years to satisfy funding criteria and at a rent to be agreed but would be responsible for ongoing maintenance.

### Procurement

16. In respect of procuring the works, it is a funding condition that the work goes out to tender. The total cost of the works are estimated to be circa £50K and these costs will be fully covered by the grant. There are one of two options being proposed:
  - (a) Groundwork puts a tender out on behalf of the Residents Association and St Andrew's Church, appoints the contractor and manages the work; or
  - (b) Groundwork prepares all the tender documents then the Council (Community Services) working with the Residents Association and the Church, select a contractor. The Council duly appoint the contractor and Groundwork manages the contract on behalf of the Council and the Residents Association.
17. The funding is then paid directly to the Council or via the Residents Association.
18. Groundwork is suggesting Option 2 as the sensible approach to take on this project and have worked this way on other Resident Association projects involving Council owned

land.

19. It is intended that the procurement will be dealt with under the Director of Corporate Services' delegated powers.

### **Background**

20. The Haughton Residents Association and St Andrew's Church identified the need to create a new Memorial Garden in 2008. Over the past two years the Residents Association and St Andrew's Church have been working with Council officers and Groundwork North East to develop the proposals for a new Memorial Garden as the current Memorial Garden at the Church is full.
21. In the early stages it was hoped that the Memorial Garden could also be used for the burial of children. A Risk Assessment and Trial Pitting were carried out as per Environment Agency guidelines. This identified that the standing water was found at a depth of 1.1 metres in each of the trial pits. As a result it was concluded that burials were not viable and that the Garden would purely be a Memorial Garden.
22. Groundwork North East was commissioned by the Residents Association and the Church to develop the design. Initially the Landscape Architect met with the Group and the Vicar to scope out the requirements. An initial layout was drafted and the view of the group and residents of Cottage Mews, which overlooks and backs onto part of the site, were requested. The residents of Cottage Mews were very much opposed to the idea of burials behind their properties on a strip of land between their rear fence and the existing Churchyard.
23. Following discussions with the residents and the group this part of the proposal was dropped and the proposed site for the Memorial Garden was acceptable to all.
24. Two designs for the Memorial Garden were developed with the Residents Association and St Andrew's Church and from this a final design was developed and agreed upon.

### **Involvement of Council Officers**

25. In developing the proposals a number of officers have been involved and the following summarises the outcome of this process.

### **Countryside Team**

26. The site lies outside the buffer zone for considering Great Crested Newts.

## **Arboricultural**

27. The primary concern is a large Horse Chestnut tree that is adjacent to the existing Memorial Garden. The new proposed footpath that links from the existing footpath within the Cemetery goes under the canopy of the tree. A no dig method would be required for the installation of this path which would also involve lifting the existing path to avoid a step due to a change in level. The plan shows this. With regards to the rest of the site it was agreed that the existing retaining wall will have restricted the root spread into the proposed area.

## **Crematorium and Burials Manager**

28. Guidance has been provided in developing the proposals and the specifics around what will be allowed to remember individuals.

## **Highways**

29. Discussions have taken place regarding the entrance off Houghton Road, the car park and a place for temporary parking of a hearse. The existing gate to the St Andrew's site does not provide a suitable entrance and the new entrance proposed with lockable gates off Houghton Road will provide easier access and egress.

## **Planning**

30. The application site falls either just within or on the edge of the Houghton Conservation Area and a detailed planning application has been submitted following discussion with Planning and Conservation officers.

## **Environment Agency**

31. The proposed site lies within flood zone 2 and a flood risk assessment is included with the planning application.

## **English Heritage**

32. English Heritage has no concerns regarding the proposals.

## **Layout and Appearance**

33. The proposed site comprises of a car park that is accessed from a new entrance off Houghton Road and a Memorial Garden.
34. The new access would be 4.8 m wide and comprise of new gate piers, lockable gates and drop kerbs to the highway.
35. The access road into the car park would be tarmac and the car park would be constructed from either an open textured porous tarmac or gravel filled cellular block. The area will be free draining following existing site contours. The car park has two designated disabled places and gives a level access into the Memorial Garden. The Memorial Garden can be accessed from the car park or the existing Churchyard.

36. The Garden comprises of various features as per the plan, Appendix 2, to create an attractive area in which people can reflect and remember. This includes an area for memorial plots, seating, memorial walls, artistic entrances and appropriate planting.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

37. Consultation on the proposed design and location has taken place with local residents and Ward Councillors.