

DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD

Notes for the guidance of burial authorities applying for the consecration of additional burial ground

1. *This note is not applicable to PCCs which are seeking to extend their churchyards. A separate guidance note is available for them*
2. Consecration is the setting aside of land or buildings for sacred use in perpetuity. The consecration of a burial ground can only be undertaken by a Bishop. The request made to the Bishop is in the form of a Petition for Consecration. This is prepared in advance and then to the Bishop as part of the consecration ceremony. The burial ground becomes legally consecrated upon the Bishop signing a document called a Sentence of Consecration, which is done in the course of a consecration ceremony.
3. The Bishop of the Diocese or an Area Bishop is able to consecrate a *portion* of a local authority (Council) burial ground or cemetery. It is not permissible to consecrate the whole area of a burial ground, but the Church of England does not offer advice on how large an area within a burial ground should be selected for consecration. Consecration is a permanent alteration to the legal status of the portion of ground, which is only capable of being removed by an Order in Council. As a local burial authority you should consult your own legal department, if you have one.
4. Before agreeing to consecrate the land, the Bishop will require us to see:
 - a. Evidence that the Council is the owner of the land in question and that it is unencumbered by any legal rights which might impede its future use (registered title number or if the land is unregistered a certificate of title signed by a solicitor acting for the Council);
 - b. The Planning Permission authorising the use, and confirmation that any relevant conditions have been discharged;
 - c. a certified minute of a resolution by the Council to ask for the land to be consecrated.
 - d. A 'local search' to demonstrate that there are no planning highway or environment issues
 - e. The full names and addresses of the persons who are to petition, on behalf of the burial authority, for the consecration of the land; please indicate their positions within the burial authority.
5. We will require 3 copies of a 1:1250 or 1:500 scale plan (A3 size) showing the portion of land in relation to the rest of the cemetery, with the area to be consecrated outlined in red; the plan should have a 'north' point, and a scale bar; it must also identify two roads so that we can locate the property clearly. The plan can be emailed to us as a pdf. This plan will later be endorsed by the bishop as legal evidence of consecration.
6. Once you have provided the above, the Registry will ask the Archdeacon to inspect the land and to report on its readiness for use as burial ground. The essential is that the burial ground is securely fenced or hedged. It is not necessary for the land to be consecrated to be fenced off within the overall burial ground, but an indication will need to be given as to how the consecrated portion will be identified. More detailed preparation in the form of paths or landscaping may also need to be undertaken if so desired.

7. A legal petition for the consecration will then be prepared by the Registry for you, A fee will be charged for the legal work undertaken on behalf of the Bishop (including attendance to notarise the consecration after the service of consecration), which is payable by the burial authority.
8. Consecrations are usually conducted by the Area Bishop of the district in which the burial ground is located. It is best for you to negotiate a date for the consecration directly with the Bishop's office but only once you have provided us with the information we need. Bishops' diaries are inevitably filled well into the future so it is sensible to get this detail settled as soon as possible. The Bishop's office will also have to liaise with the Registry, since the Registrar will have to attend the consecration service as well.

Useful addresses and telephone numbers

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Shrewsbury
68 London Road
Shrewsbury
SY2 6PG
01743 235867

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Wolverhampton
61 Richmond Road
Merridale
WOLVERHAMPTON
WV3 9JH
01902 824503

Mrs Pauline Hollington
Lichfield Diocesan Registry Assistant
6-10 George Street
Snow Hill
Wolverhampton
WV2 4DN
Direct line: 01902 578005
Email: Pauline.hollington@fbcmb.co.uk

Niall Blackie
Joint Registrar of the Diocese of Lichfield
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