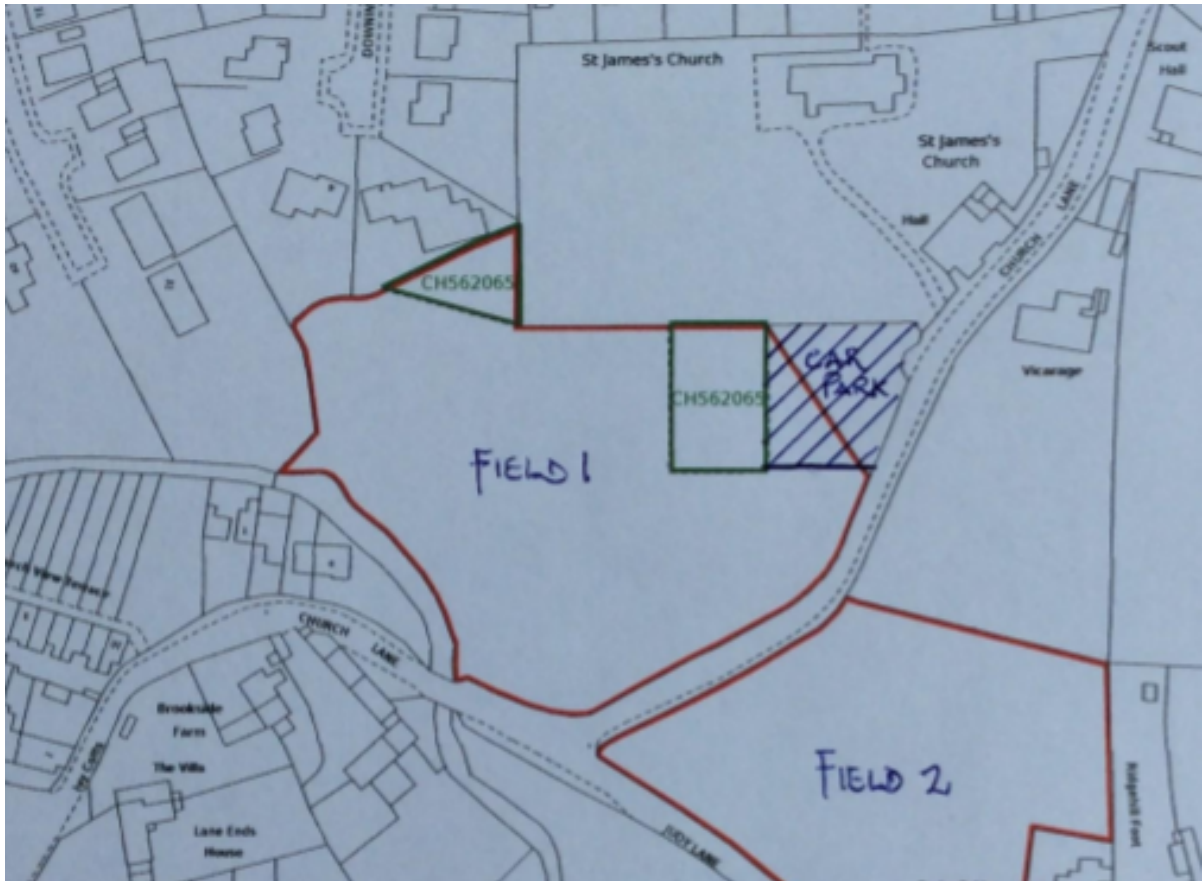


PCC responses to the comments and questions in the community consultation.

Practical Comments and Questions.

- A clear map



- **How many spaces are left?**

As of August 2022 in the St James churchyard extension, there are 3 spaces left for new graves in the present row, with a possible additional 6 spaces on the opposite side. Spaces in family graves are not affected by this. There are no known 'available' plots left in the old churchyard.

- **Boundaries of the parish**



This doesn't include the other churches in our benefice nor would this change if civil parish boundaries were altered, since it is the ecclesiastical boundary that applies.

- **Who is the Joint Working Party (JWP) and what is their role?**

The JWP, was set up after the public meeting held on 8th September 2021 to agree the future of the Sutton St. James graveyard. It is made up of representatives of the Parochial church council (PCC), the Parish Council and the wider community.

The JWP's role is to find the most practical way forward that balances issues including cost, the environment, the future and other constraints. Its goal is to find a solution that works on all levels. It recommends proposals to the PCC and keeps the PC informed.

- **Guarantees**

Whilst everyone can note their wishes for their funeral arrangements in their will including a wish to be buried, this can never be guaranteed, but every effort would be made to accommodate these wishes where possible. Anyone living in the parish has a right to be buried in the churchyard if it is still open.

Unfortunately it is not possible to purchase a grave plot for future use. People from the parish who wish it are buried on a "first come first served" basis while grave plots are still available.

Comments on burials and the memorial garden.

Comments were received in support of a memorial garden, "a quiet space", "a wild garden", "a memory garden", "a community space", "a space to scatter ashes with easy access" and comments were received in support of further burials in the local parish, suggesting that this is an important issue .

Comments and Questions on Costs.

- **What are current fees for burials?**

The church currently charges approx £360 for a burial of a body in the church yard (not including individual costs of funeral directors, services, headstones etc.) this is in line with parochial fee structures of the Church of England. The church is not able to change these fees ensuring burials are available to all who choose them. The fees for cremations are less.

- **The Church and costs.**

The church has and is paying for the upkeep of the current graveyard. Finances however are finite and the PCC has to make decisions on a regular basis about how the money it has is spent. These decisions are not always easy; It is felt that the ever expanding graveyard is not a sustainable cost for the future.

While the Church of England has considerable investments Sutton St James is not a rich church. Of the income it has, £43,000 is paid to Chester Diocese for the Parish Share (this contributes to the clergy stipend throughout the diocese and is set according to census data). The rest has to be split between the overheads of running a parish church, maintenance of both the graveyard and the church buildings being the greatest expenditure.

- **General concerns on costs**

The costs of an extension to the graveyard are yet unknown, however, the JWP guarantee they will be kept as low as feasibly possible with all avenues for funding will be explored. The cost of the memorial garden has already been gifted to the PCC.

Comments and Questions on Communications.

- **Issues in Church communication with the parish.**

The PCC wishes to apologise for any unintended hurt caused by our decision not to extend the churchyard for new burials, without prior consultation with the community. The pace at which the present extension has/is being filled has surprised us and we are seeking to find additional ways we can continue to provide a place for loved ones to be remembered for the foreseeable future. We acknowledge the strength of feeling in the community to provide burial space and are grateful for the opportunity to serve parishioners in this way. The affection with which the church is held in the hearts of the community is deeply encouraging and is reciprocated by all at St James.