

NEW MUSLIM CEMETERY UPDATE

Summer 2025 Edition

About MBCOL

MBCOL is more than just a collective of funeral arrangers and directors we are a community organisation, entrusted to lead on key burial matters, legal reforms, local and national advocacy, long-term cemetery planning and much more. Our board comprises of young, energetic, and passionate member alongside experienced and equally passionate elders who work tirelessly and voluntarily, often behind the scenes not just across Leicester, but nationally and even in Europe to serve our community.

While our public presence is often visible during funeral services, our work extends far beyond that. We engage in policy development, training, stakeholder engagement, research and public sector education to raise awareness and improve Muslim burial provisions across the UK and much more.



**Committed to providing
a dignified service
to the community**



The new MBCOL Board took office in October 2023, and has made the new Muslim cemetery project our number one priority.

Alhamdulillah, since our last Annual General Meeting in December 2024, we have made substantial progress and are pleased to provide this important update to our community.

As we all know, Saffron Hill Cemetery is nearing capacity. The new cemetery project is therefore not only timely but essential. Our ethos, from day one, has been to work diligently and transparently, engaging with all our affiliates, respected community leaders, and local authorities to lay the groundwork for a long-term solution that will serve not just the present generation, but generations to come, Insha'Allah.

We are currently progressing on two parallel cemetery projects. Some of our key achievements to date include:

- 1. Cemetery project in collaboration with Leicester City Council**
- 2. Privately Owned Muslim Cemetery in partnership with Cemetery Development Solutions (CDS)**

Our goal is to ensure that the Muslim community in Leicester and Leicestershire has access to dignified burial space for at least the next 100 years, insha'Allah. This is not a temporary fix but a visionary, community-led solution for the long term.

Project 1: Cemetery project in collaboration with Leicester City Council

MBCOL has developed a strong and constructive partnership with Leicester City Council in pursuit of a new burial site. A large parcel of land has already been identified by the local authority and has undergone rigorous environmental testing over the last 18 - 24 months. The Council is now awaiting the final report from the Environment Agency. If the findings are favourable, the next stage will be a formal community consultation and the initiation of planning procedures. We kindly request your continued support and duas for the success of this work.

We have been assured that a significant portion of the land will be allocated exclusively for Muslim burials, similar to the arrangement currently in place at Saffron Hill Cemetery. Additionally, we are also holding discussions with the local authority about potentially acquiring part of the land outright. This would allow for a privately managed Muslim section with greater flexibility, particularly for out-of-hours burials.

While the precise location of this land cannot be disclosed at this stage, we can confirm that the site is on the borders of Leicester and Leicestershire.

Project 2: Privately Owned Muslim Cemetery with Cemetery Development Solutions (CDS)

We are delighted to confirm that MBCOL has officially instructed Cemetery Development Solutions (CDS) to assist with the planning and development of a privately owned Muslim cemetery, based on a Waqf (endowment) model, ensuring it is owned by and for the Muslim community for the sole purpose of Muslim burials and the long-term benefit of the community.

CDS is a highly experienced organisation with over 20 years in the sector, having successfully delivered more than 500 feasibility studies and developed over 50 cemeteries, including several prominent Muslim cemeteries such as Gardens of Peace (London) and Bedford and Peterborough Muslim cemeteries.

We are currently sourcing land with a minimum of 25 acres, ideally up to 100+ acres. Our vision is long-term: land that will serve the community for 50–100 years. However, Due to the scarcity of large land parcels within Leicester City, we will initially consider a minimum of 25 acres, which we expect to meet the needs of the community for the next 50 years. In that time, adjacent or nearby land could be acquired to meet future demand - a model successfully implemented by other Muslim communities across the UK, with whom we are actively liaising to share best practices.

Our land search began within a five mile radius east of central Leicester, close to the city's core Muslim population. Following the initial screening, 17 sites within two miles of the community have been identified as potentially suitable for cemetery development. It has been recommended that these 17 sites undergo full assessment to determine their viability. An additional 110 potentially suitable sites lie within a three to five mile radius; however we will complete the assessment of the initial 17 sites before expanding the search.

Each site will be assessed thoroughly against criteria such as water retention, geological suitability, and other regulatory requirements. If no suitable site is found in that area, our search will expand outward in all directions.

Once a site is shortlisted and deemed feasible, detailed plans for the cemetery layout, facilities, and structure will be shared with the community and our affiliates, subject to formal negotiations with landowners.

We are mindful of the complexity and cost of such a project—rigorous environmental testing alone can take 12–18 months across all seasons and requires significant financial resources. The overall project cost is estimated to exceed £2 million.

Alhamdulillah, MBCOL has already funded the initial phase of this work using our limited internal funds. We have a robust financial model in place to raise the required funds in a way that is not financially burdensome on the community. Given the current economic climate, our fundraising strategy will be innovative and different, and we request your Duas that it succeeds, so we are not required to appeal to the community for financial contributions.

Ongoing Engagement and Wider Discussions

In addition to these two major initiatives, we have been proactively engaging with every local authority across Leicester and Leicestershire. We are exploring all opportunities—whether by partnership or land acquisition. Alhamdulillah, we have been met with openness and encouragement, and many councils have expressed a strong desire to work with MBCOL in solving what has become a shared crisis: the shortage of burial space.

One of the key observations from our discussions is that this is not solely a Muslim community issue. Local authorities themselves are struggling to secure sufficient burial space for the wider non-Muslim population. Several councils have even sought MBCOL's input and support in developing joint solutions, to which we have responded positively, pending further negotiations.

We are also in regular contact with land agents and organisations specialising in burial land, ensuring we are aware of every potential opportunity as it arises.

A Unified Approach and Clear Leadership

MBCOL has received unanimous support from our affiliates, Masaajids, community leaders, councillors and our MP, majority of the affiliates, Masaajids and community leaders have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirming their support for MBCOL as the sole representative body to lead on the new Muslim cemetery project for Leicester and Leicestershire. The Local Authority and CDS are both aware of these MOU's being in place and MBCOL being the sole representative body of the Muslim community in Leicester and Leicestershire in leading on the new cemetery project.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of unity and a coordinated leadership. Projects of this scale and complexity demand singular leadership, vision and strategic planning. We humbly but firmly urge all individuals or groups considering independent efforts to refrain from pursuing parallel initiatives. Such actions risk duplicating efforts, creating confusion, inflating land prices and ultimately undermining this long-term, community-led project.

We remain open and welcome those with expertise, resources, or constructive ideas to come forward and work collaboratively with MBCOL, under one umbrella, for the betterment of our community - we encourage you to reach out to Naveed Ibrahim directly at admin@mbcol.org.uk.

Your Continued Support and Duas

We are truly humbled by the trust and support you continue to show us. Your Duas, encouragement, and commitment from, you the community, our affiliates and community leaders motivate us daily. In times like this, unity is not just important—it is essential.

We ask you to keep MBCOL and this project in your duas. May Allah (SWT) grant us success in this noble effort and allow us to leave behind a legacy that will serve future generations, Ameen.

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