

Our Proposals for the Rose Garden at Christ Church

We fully understand the need to recognise both the legal requirements relating to sacred ground and to the emotional sensitivities that any changes we might make, can have on those whose loved ones are remembered here. For this reason, we have consulted closely with the DAC Secretary and reviewed other solutions and propose the following:

1. All current Rose bushes and small shrubs will be cut off at ground level and their roots killed with systemic weedkiller. The ground will be thoroughly weeded and cleared of annual and perennial weeds.
2. To preserve the position of the plaques, the ground will be grid mapped in 2 metre squares to establish their current placements. They will then be removed and a decorative weed suppressing mulch ([the product is called Strulch](#)) will be applied. The plaques will then be relocated, and the next 2 metre area will be completed. As part of this process, we will record the names of all those whose ashes are here, whether remembered by plaques or not, so that we can create a searchable electronic record for posterity and a written record to hold in the church.
3. To remove the need to disturb the ground itself, we propose to introduce a number of raised beds down the middle of each of the strips of garden. This will enable us to refresh the soil and introduce succession planting to provide colour and interest from Spring through to Autumn. These beds will create a unified and organised design and will discourage relatives from planting their own shrubs and floral tributes – enabling us to reinforce our current rules with minimum fuss. The precise design of the raised bed containers has yet to be decided but the materials proposed are currently steel.
4. The access paths which are currently slab paved will be levelled and replaced with a uniform, fine gravel surface creating an attractive and visually unified safe route around the garden.
5. We intend to remove and decommission the window lighting features which are no longer used and which block the main path through the garden itself. This will improve access.
6. The grassed edges of the garden and paths will be finished with steel curbing to create a neat and easy to maintain look.
7. As part of the ongoing maintenance and management of the churchyard, we will need a new storage container to hold, mowers, petrol and other tools. Our proposals include permission to site a large steel storage container immediately East of the current rubbish platform at the back of the car park. The container would be painted dark green and be set back from the path to enable a screen of hedging/shrubs to conceal it over time. It will provide secure storage and most importantly will allow us to store petrol for our various mowers well away from the church building. The dimensions of the container will be approximately 6m x 2.4m x 2.5m. The proposed site for the storage area is at the extreme north side of the graveyard outside the area of burial. We anticipate some minor levelling of the ground and placing slabs as bases for the container to allow it to stand level.

Summary

We have thoroughly investigated the options for decommissioning our Rose Garden and believe that our current proposals avoid disturbance to the sacred ground and allow for the retention of the memorial plaques which, in our experience, remain a powerful emotional symbol of remembrance for many visitors.

The reasons for the work are two-fold. To enable us to manage the garden more effectively and to provide a fitting and respectful resting place for many generations of our local community. It forms a central part of our Mission to connect with our community.

Our records show that well over 1,300 ashes burials have been conducted in the area over the past 40 or so years. By recording the names of all those remembered in the Rose Garden, whether by plaque or not, we can provide a further resource to those who continue to mourn the loss of a loved one. We will hold a written record of all those buried in the Rose Garden for public reference in the church, as well as online through our History pages.

During the lockdown, many have come forward, as volunteers, to help keep the weeds down and, as a result, they have been able to interact with visitors to the Rose Garden on an unprecedented scale. Our feedback is overwhelmingly in favour of keeping the garden in a good state of repair and we have had many positive comments.

The proposed works will enable us to demonstrate in a very real way, our appreciation for those who have gone before and give them a respectful and dignified final resting place. They will also make the Garden safe and a place of peace and remembrance for the many visitors who come to our site.