

Meeting of the Environment & Leisure Committee

Monday 14 April 2025

Agenda Item 7.2

TO FURTHER CONSIDER THE CONSECRATION OF CEMETERY LAND IN THE NEW Y- SECTION TO ACCOMMODATE ALL FAITHS WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY

1.0 Overview

- 1.1 Further to the initial mapping of the new Y-section at Snatts Road Cemetery by a company called Pear Technology, separate areas had been allocated for both burials and ashes interments.
- 1.2 At the Environment and Leisure meeting on 20 March 2025, staff had been asked to look into having both natural and consecrated land and to consider how much space would be intended for non-consecrated burials. As the town was becoming more diverse it was important to understand the process for burials for all faiths and how this can be accommodated.

2.0 Feedback from the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM):

*The Local Authority Cemeteries Order states that you **may** consecrate some of your site (you don't have to) but you **must** leave areas of your site un-consecrated for use for other denominations.*

With regards to Muslim burials, they have specific requirements such as the graves should be orientated towards Mecca, their preference is shroud burial (rather than coffin), they often like to backfill the graves themselves and traditionally they require single grave depth; buried alongside their loved ones. In Muslim cemeteries they also mound the graves as they do not like anyone walking on top, although this is not practical in most cemeteries. The faith also requires a quick burial which is not always possible but we would need to stipulate this to the community at the outset.

We were advised that if we were considering all options, to consider the demand and contact the local Imam in the community for further guidance. For example, if we had a large Muslim population then it would be a needed provision, which varies geographically. A member of the Uckfield Muslim Community Association has forwarded on details of this request although no feedback has been received so far, but if any measures are different than those outlined above this can be brought back to the committee meeting.

3.0 On the ground

- 3.1 The practical side of interments ensures that the Grounds staff are given 5-10 days' notice period to prepare for burials and ashes interments. This includes booking contractors for grave digging ahead of the time set and making sure staff are available on the day.
- 3.2 For any future increase in the number of requests for Muslim burials, consideration may need to be given to repositioning a row of plots, which may result in less burial space, although this could be managed.

4.0 Choosing to consecrate land in the new Y-section

4.1 To be clear, ICCM have also advised that it is up to the burial authority to decide.

“LACO states a burial authority **may** if they think fit-

(a) apply to the bishop of the diocese in which a cemetery is situated for the consecration of any part thereof;

(b) set apart for the use of a particular denomination or religious body any part of a cemetery which has not been consecrated.

(2) A burial authority in exercising the powers conferred by paragraph (1) shall satisfy themselves that a sufficient part of the cemetery remains un-consecrated and not set apart for the use of particular denominations or religious bodies.

You are not required to make provision for every faith, you can leave the area un-consecrated, and have no sections set aside for particular denominations. Every site is different and some of these decisions would be driven by demand and space.

However, the diocese had also advised previously that it may be more efficient and cost effective to consecrate in some parts, otherwise this may result in a request for the Bishop to attend and consecrate a part of the land at a time, for a single burial.

4.2 It may be most effective to consecrate half of the land in each section for burials and ashes interments to allow certain measure of land for the purpose of natural burials, secular and non-secular beliefs.

5.0 Suggested by the Head Groundsman:

5.1 The Head Groundsman provided the following update:

Based on the 2021 Census data, the religious composition of Uckfield, East Sussex is as follows:

Religion	Number of Residents	Percentage
Christian	7,308	48.6%
No Religion	6,572	43.7%
Muslim	101	0.7%
Hindu	44	0.3%
Sikh	12	0.1%
Buddhist	44	0.3%
Jewish	6	0.1%
	73	

Looking forward to an estimate for 2031

Reasonable estimate:

If national trends continue and Uckfield continues to develop (e.g. new housing, improved transport links to cities), we might expect:

- A **1–2% increase** in minority religious groups per decade.
- A **5–10% increase** in “No Religion” over the next 10–15 years.
- A **gradual decrease** in the Christian population by a similar margin.

By 2031, diversity might look something like:

Religion	Projected %
Christian	~40-43%
No Religion	~48-50%
Minority Religions	~3-5%

- 5.2 The Head Groundsman suggests with these figures a 10% area would be sufficient and maybe the last two rows nearest the wood would be most suitable. Given that well over 90% of Uckfield currently identify as Christian or Atheist, he suggested that a 20% area should be allocated for other denominations; this area could also be consecrated as the needs arise, and 20% would allow for Uckfield's growing diversity

6.0 Nature and ecology

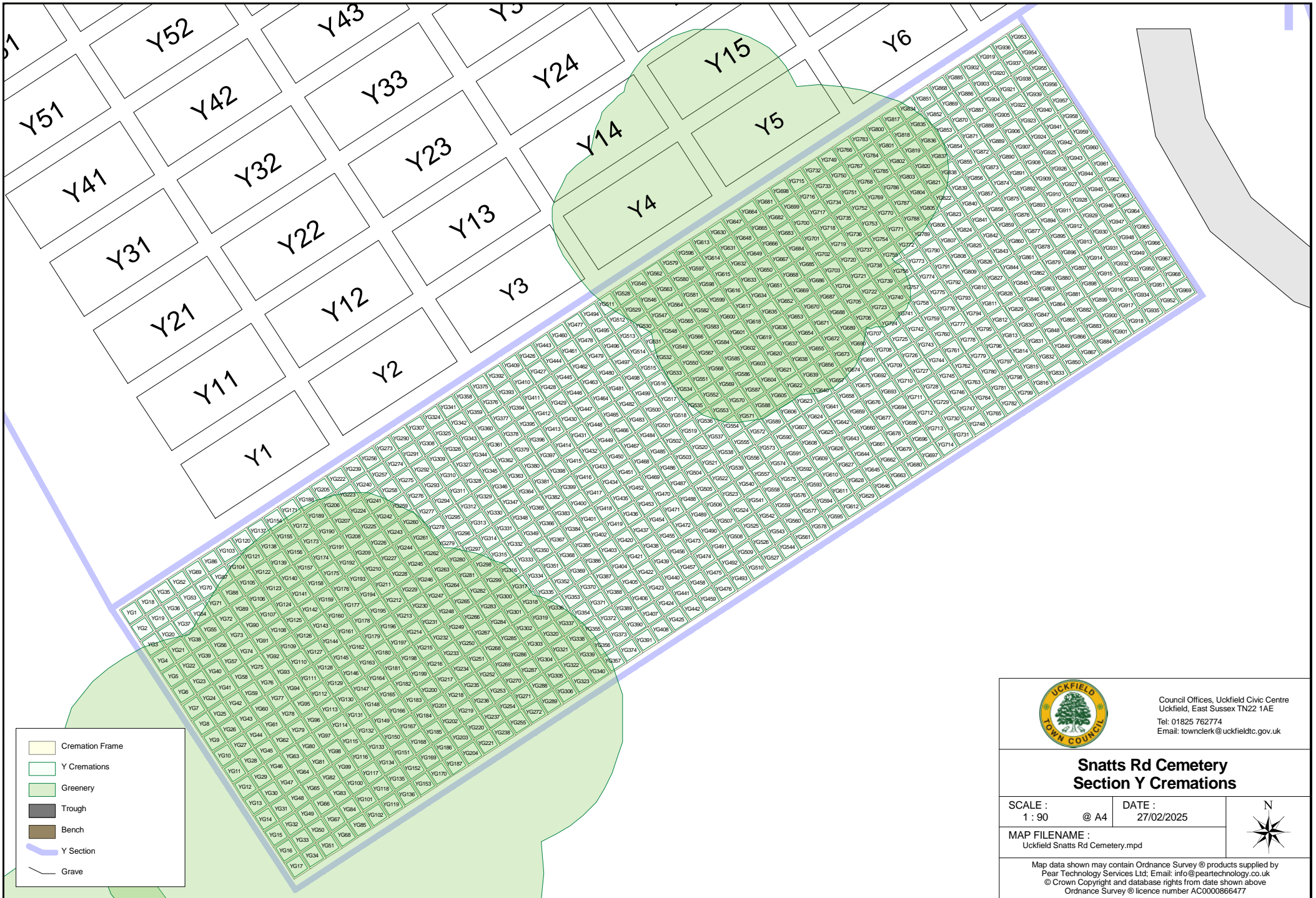
- 6.1 A request had been made to include a 15-metre buffer to be factored in for nature and ecology away from burial areas. ICCM have advised that "there is no strict legal requirement about distance from trees, but practical ecological advice says you need to consider the root distance around a tree to avoid major roots, avoid root disturbance impacting the grave or the tree and allow for natural decomposition without affecting tree health. Obviously, every species of tree is different so you would have to consult with a tree specialist on this and your environmental department perhaps."

The Ranger advised that the trees had been surveyed nearby with works for removal due to oak decline.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are asked to note the report and, consider:
- (i) whether to allow space for all denominations, and if so;
 - (ii) which areas should be consecrated and non-consecrated in the new Y-section, and;
 - (iii) agree for staff to conduct those arrangements previously set out for the process of consecration.

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Snatts Rd Crematorium Section Y Cremations

SCALE :
 1 : 90 @ A4

DATE :
 27/02/2025



MAP FILENAME :
 Uckfield Snatts Rd Crematory.mpd

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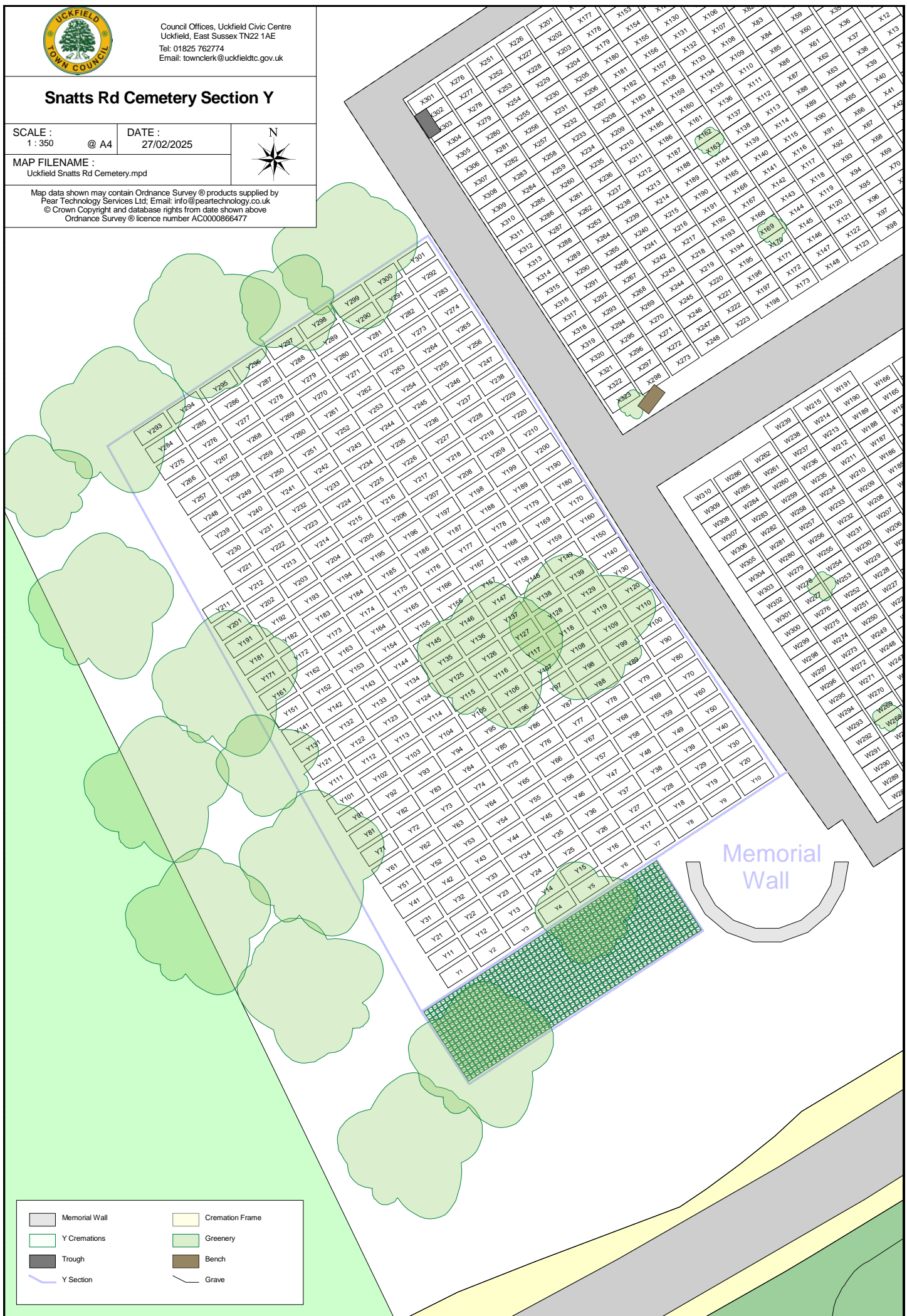
Snatts Rd Cemetery Section Y

SCALE : 1 : 350 DATE : 27/02/2025
 @ A4



MAP FILENAME : Uckfield Snatts Rd Cemetery.mpd

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	Memorial Wall		Cremation Frame
	Y Cremations		Greenery
	Trough		Bench
	Y Section		Grave



Snatts Rd