

Go-ahead for Crematorium

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CHATTERIS celebrating this week after councillors went against recommendations and approved plans for a crematorium in the town.

Town and district councillor Florence Newell, who has pushed tirelessly to get an application by Memoria Crematoria Ltd approved, welcomed a decision by Fenland Council's planning committee on Wednesday to go against officers' recommendations and pass the plan.

And Jamieson Hodgson, Memoria's Business Development Director, also welcomed the news and said they would be pushing forward as quickly as possible to meet conditions of the approval, which included the drawing up of a suitable section 106 agreement, which would secure cash for amenities in Chatteris.

The proposal to build a state-of-the-art crematorium on land off Fenton Way had been recommended for refusal in a report to Wednesday's meeting with planning officers, arguing the site was unsuitable and the crematorium could have a detrimental effect on the remaining land, which is earmarked for business and industrial development.

It was also felt the site was unsuitable because of its close proximity to businesses and industrial units already in place. There were also strenuous objections from rival crematorium provider Mercia, which is currently in the process of building one at March.

They argued the March crematorium would meet the needs of the local community and a second one in Fenland could mean the area is left without a viable one in the future.

But Mr Hodgson said Memoria's plans for Chatteris were not drawn up on a whim or in a fit of peek and his company would not be investing around £2.5million in building a crematorium at Chatteris if they thought it would not be viable.

"We are absolutely delighted with the planning committee's decision and will be working to sort the section 106 out as quickly as possible.

"There are other steps to go through including building regulations but we are hoping we will be able to start building within the next nine or 10 months and we hope to be up and running by January or February 2011," said Mr Hodgson.

"We have always believed Chatteris is the best location for a crematorium in this area, but we also believe that there is more than enough demand for ours and the one at March. We will be serving mainly the south and east of Cambridgeshire and also Huntingdon as well as the villages around Chatteris. The March one is likely to attract people from the Wisbech area and even into Lincolnshire," said Mr Hodgson.

Mrs Newell added: "I am delighted, it is good news for Chatteris, it is time we started getting a few things. I always believed Chatteris was the best place for the crematorium."

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