

Christopher Chope OBE MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

MoJ ref:

8 December 2016

Dear Christopher,

### **NEW SOUTHGATE CEMETERY BILL: SECOND READING DEBATE**

During the Second Reading debate on the New Southgate Cemetery Bill on 29 November 2016, I referred to information which the Bill promoters have provided about consultation on the Bill's provisions which they have undertaken with faith groups. I undertook to write to you about whether this information would be placed on the record.

The correspondence to which I referred consists of private exchanges between the Bill promoters and a number of third parties. As such, it would not be appropriate for me to make the correspondence publicly available. I can, however, reiterate the assurance I gave to the House during the debate that, having reviewed the Bill promoters' engagement with those groups most affected by the Bill's proposals, I am satisfied that the issue has been properly addressed.

I would, of course, expect the New Southgate Cemetery burial authorities to continue to ensure that relevant faith and cultural sensitivities are taken into account, and to have due regard to available guidance and best practice, in exercising the powers conferred by the Bill, if enacted.

During the debate, you also questioned the record keeping practices currently undertaken by the Bill promoters, and I have therefore asked them for confirmation of this. As required by the Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847, the New Southgate burial authorities maintain comprehensive records which are available for inspection at the Cemetery. As the 1847 Act does not cover the new powers contained in the current Bill, the Government has secured an amendment – set out in Clause 5 – which imposes new duties in relation to record keeping. Taken together, the 1847 provisions and the Bill requirements place the New Southgate burial authorities under duties in respect of record keeping which are equivalent to those applying to municipal cemeteries under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977.

I am copying this letter to the Speaker, participants in the Second Reading debate and the Bill promoters, and have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.



**DR PHILLIP LEE MP**