

Number: 7



Rhif y Cais / Application Number : C16/0157/11/LL

Cynllun lleoliad ar gyfer adnabod y safle yn unig. Dim i raddfa.
Location Plan for identification purposes only. Not to scale.



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REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICE MANAGER	CAERNARFON

Application Number: C16/0157/11/LL
Date Registered: 18/02/2016
Application Type: Full - Planning
Community: Bangor
Ward: Marchog

Proposal: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SOCIAL CLUB BUILDING AND ERECTION OF A THREE-STOREY BUILDING WITH SHOP (INCLUDING CAFE, FASCIA SIGNAGE AND ATM) ON GROUND FLOOR AND 10 ONE BEDROOM FLATS ON THE FLOORS ABOVE.
Location: MAESGEIRCHEN SOCIAL CLUB, 90, PENRHYN AVENUE, BANGOR, GWYNEDD, LL57 1LT

Summary of the Recommendation:

TO APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

1. Description:

- 1.1 This is a full application for the demolition of the existing Maesgeirchen Social Club building and erect a three-storey building in its place that would include the following elements:
- Shop on the ground floor including 200m² of retail floor area allocated for convenience goods, café counter seating area, along with a storage / office / canteen area for staff - it is proposed to open the shop for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - 10 one bedroom flats on the floors above (5 on each floor). Each flat would include a bedroom, a living /dining room, kitchen, bathroom and hall and would each have a floor area of approximately 45m².
 - 7 parking spaces would be earmarked outside, including 2 spaces for disabled drivers, along with separate spaces to store commercial and residential waste.
- 1.2 The new building would be 9.8m high and would have the same footprint as the existing building. It would have red brick walls whilst the flat roof would be made of slate-hung mansard.
- 1.3 The following information below was submitted as part of the application:
- Design and Access Statement
 - Community and Language Statement
 - Demolition Method Statement
 - Retail Report
 - Housing Market Assessment
- 1.4 The site is located within the development boundary of the Sub-regional Centre of Bangor as defined in the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan. The site is mainly in a residential area, which includes a variety of businesses such as service shops and businesses. The location is outside the area that has been designated as Bangor City Centre and it is also located outside the city's Main Shopping Area.
- 1.5 The location of the site is fairly isolated from other developments within Maesgeirchen Estate with two designated Protected Play Areas nearby, one to the north and the other to the south, there is a wooded slope to the west that rises towards Tan y Coed street and Penrhyn Avenue is to the east where the Llys Dylan single-storey houses lie opposite.

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2. Relevant Policies:

2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Unitary Development Plan.

2.2 Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan 2009:

POLICY A2 – PROTECTING THE SOCIAL, LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL FABRIC OF COMMUNITIES

Safeguard the social, linguistic or cultural cohesion of communities against significant harm due to the size, scale or location of proposals.

POLICY B22 – BUILDING DESIGN

Promote good building design by ensuring that proposals conform to a series of criteria aimed at safeguarding the recognised features and character of the local landscape and environment.

POLICY B23 - AMENITIES

Safeguard the amenities of the local neighbourhood by ensuring that proposals conform to a series of criteria aimed at protecting the recognised features and amenities of the local area.

POLICY B25 - BUILDING MATERIALS

Safeguard the visual character by ensuring that building materials are of a high standard and are in keeping with the character and appearance of the local area.

POLICY B28 – UNSTABLE LAND

Proposals on land, or adjacent land, which is or is likely to be unstable will be refused unless a series of criteria can be satisfied that will not cause significant harm to the development.

POLICY B33 – DEVELOPMENT THAT CREATES POLLUTION OR NUISANCE

Protect human amenities, the quality of public health and the natural or built environment from high levels of pollution.

POLICY C1 – LOCATING NEW DEVELOPMENT

Land within the development boundaries of towns and villages and the developed form of rural villages will be the main focus for new developments. New buildings, structures and ancillary facilities in the countryside will be refused with the exception of a development that is permitted by another policy of the Plan.

POLICY C2 – ADOPTING THE SEQUENTIAL APPROACH

Applications used by a large number of people on sites that have not been designated in the Plan for those specific uses will be refused unless they are located within the development boundaries of the Sub-regional Centre or Urban Centres and that clear evidence can be provided to show that the sequential test has been used when selecting which site to develop.

POLICY C3 – RE-USING PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED SITES

Proposals will be approved that prioritise re-using land and buildings previously developed and located within or around development boundaries, provided that the site or the building and the use are suitable.

POLICY CH3 – NEW HOUSES ON UNALLOCATED SITES WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES OF THE SUB-REGIONAL CENTRE AND URBAN CENTRES

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Approve the construction of houses on appropriate unallocated sites within the development boundaries of the Sub-regional Centre and the Urban Centres.

POLICY CH6 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON ALL ALLOCATED SITES IN THE PLAN AREA AND ON UNALLOCATED SITES THAT BECOME AVAILABLE WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT BOUNDARIES OF THE SUB-REGIONAL CENTRE AND THE URBAN CENTRES

Approve proposals for housing developments on sites allocated for housing or on random sites for five or more units within the development boundaries of the sub-regional centre and the urban centres, which provide an appropriate element of affordable housing.

POLICY CH32 – INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Proposals that are likely to lead to a substantial increase in the number of journeys made by private motor vehicles will be refused unless there is an adequate public transport service in place as an alternative, or unless the development will be effectively served by public transport in the future and that consideration has been given to promoting the use of public transport services in the planning and design of the development.

POLICY CH33 – SAFETY ON ROADS AND STREETS

Development proposals will be approved provided they can conform to specific criteria relating to the vehicular entrance, the standard of the existing roads network and traffic calming measures.

POLICY CH35 – PUBLIC CAR PARKING FACILITIES

Proposals which provide public parking facilities which fill obvious gaps in the existing provision will be approved if they conform with a series of criteria regarding visual, environmental, parking and highways issues, as well as matters regarding the scale and design of the development and its impact on adjoining properties.

POLICY CH38 – SAFEGUARDING EXISTING FACILITIES

Proposals to change the use of buildings used to provide educational, health and community facilities will be refused unless they conform to a series of specific criteria related to the need within the community for the existing service, availability of similar facilities within reasonable distance, the viability of the existing service and also considerations related to the environment and amenities.

POLICY D27 – COMPARISON AND CONVENIENCE GOODS RETAIL STORES OUTSIDE DEFINED TOWN CENTRES

Proposals for new retail shops selling comparison and/or convenience goods or extensions to existing ones on sites within or near Service Centres but outside the defined town centres will be approved provided they comply with all the criteria relating to establishing a need, the sequential test, the impact on the viability, vitality and attractiveness of the town centre, traffic and parking matters and the availability of facilities.

Supplementary Planning Guidance – Planning and the Welsh language

2.3 National Policies:

Planning Policy Wales - (Edition 8, January 2016)

Technical Advice Note 4: Retail and Town Centres (1996)

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2009)

Technical Advice Note 20: Planning and the Welsh Language (2013)

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3. Relevant Planning History:

3.11.309 : Licensed social club, community room and car park - Approved: 05/08/77

3.11.309A : Re-arranging temporary buildings - Approved: December 1985

4. Consultations:

Community Council:	Not received
Transportation Unit:	No objection – propose conditions regarding the parking and access arrangement
Environmental Health / Public Protection:	<p><u>Observations</u></p> <p>An air extraction system could be required for the café's kitchen and should it be required, more details will be needed regarding the system, including a noise assessment. Emphasise the importance of having appropriate arrangements to store and collect commercial waste.</p>
Natural Resources Wales	No objection – standard observations for the developers
Welsh Water:	Not received
Biodiversity Unit	Not received
Strategic Housing Unit	Not received
North Wales Police	Need more information regarding safety arrangements for the site
Public Consultation:	<p>A notice was posted on site and in the press, and neighbours were informed. At the time of writing this report, the advertisement period had not come to an end but objections have already been received which relate to material planning matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on the privacy of surrounding houses due to overlooking from the windows of the proposed flats • Increase in traffic and noise at night would add to disturbance for residents especially for those living in the homes for the elderly that are opposite. • Opening a 24 hour shop would add to antisocial problems • The design of the building is sub-standard, the building would be too large for the site and it would look out of place in this location • The development would be tantamount to an over-development of the site • There was already a sufficient number of flats on the estate and in Bangor in general and that no more was required • There is no need for more shops on the estate

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- Land subsidence is already a problem for Tan y Coed houses and drilling at the bottom of the slope would exacerbate this problem
- Bangor high street shops are close enough if residents require such goods

The following observations were also received; these are not material planning considerations:

- Other shops are already on the estate and their business would be under threat as a result of the new shop
- The development would be detrimental to views from Tan y Coed houses
- Concerns regarding who would occupy the one-bedroom flats especially when considering the proximity of designated play areas for the development
- The site should be used for flats for the elderly
- There is a legal covenant on the site which limits its use to a social club for Maesgeirchen residents
- A concern regarding child safety during the construction process
- The current owner had intentionally let the quality of the existing building to deteriorate

5. Assessment of the relevant planning considerations:

The principle of the development

- 5.1 The site is located within the development boundary of Bangor and Policy C1 of the Unitary Development Plan states that land within town and village development boundaries and the developed form of rural villages will be the main focus for developments.
- 5.2 Policy C3 approves proposals that re-use land or buildings previously developed and located within or around development boundaries, provided that the site or the building and the use are suitable.
- 5.3 Policy CH38 of the UDP attempts to safeguard existing community facilities by setting four criteria that should be met prior to changing the use of a site:
1. Firstly, it is requested that there is clear evidence that there is no substantial demand for the existing facility : the doors closed in the existing facility in August 2015 after several years of financial difficulties and changes in the managerial system. Should there be sufficient demand to keep the social club open, the facility would have been viable and the building would not be empty.
 2. There were other similar facilities within reasonable distance from the new development : whilst this exact type of facility is not available within Maesgeirchen, it is important to note that there is a proposal to provide a cafe element within the new building and it could be argued that such a facility would generally be more accessible for the public than a club with limited membership. In terms of facilities such as a bar and function rooms, there is no shortage of these in the city of Bangor and whilst some additional travelling would be required it is not considered that this would be unreasonable for such services.
 3. That the existing facility is not viable - see point 1 above

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4. That the change would not cause significant harm to the environment or amenities - see the discussion below regarding impacts on the amenities of the area and individual residents.

- 5.4 Whilst accepting that a community facility has been lost from this site due to problems with the viability of the previous business, it is noted that the new building would also be a community facility in itself, and by providing a broader range of services, there is potential to ensure a more certain future for the site. For these reasons, it is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the aims of Policy CH38 of the UDP.
- 5.5 In terms of the above, the policies of the Unitary Development Plan are supportive of the principle of seeking to ensure positive developments on re-development sites such as this one which is within urban development boundaries. It is also important to consider the current context of the building, namely that there is extant planning permission for the licensed Social Club, without any planning restriction on the operating hours of the business. Whilst the following sections of the report will consider the planning implications of the different aspects of the application, it is also essentially important to consider whether or not the detrimental impacts of this proposed development would be worse in terms of their impacts on the amenities of local residents than what could take place if existing rights were used in full.

Visual amenities

- 5.6 The proposed building would be substantially higher than the existing building, and indeed it would be higher than all of the other buildings in the vicinity. Nevertheless, there are many three-storey buildings in other parts of Maesgeirchen, including blocks of flats of similar size, and it is not considered that a building such as this would be different in nature to other buildings in on the estate. In addition, as the building is at the bottom of a slope, it can be seen from several directions in the context of buildings that are behind it, on top of the slope, and these would continue to have roofs on a higher level than the new building which would mean that the building would not dominate the local townscape.
- 5.7 There are no architectural features to the existing building and it is in a poor condition, therefore, it is considered that it is reasonable to demolish it and construct a new building in its place. Whilst there are no special architectural features to the proposed building, it would be built in accordance with modern construction standards and it would not be dissimilar in nature and character to many other buildings on the estate and therefore, it is considered that it would be in-keeping and acceptable for the location.
- 5.8 As the development is on a previously used site for purposes that are acceptable in an urban location and is in an area that includes many buildings of the same scale and character, it is not considered that it would look out of place and it is considered that the development's appearance would be acceptable and would conform to the requirements of Policies B22 and B25 of the DUP.

General and residential amenities

- 5.9 Given that the proposed development is on a previously used site for a Social Club that did not have any restriction in terms of conditions relating to opening hours, whilst accepting that any nuisance caused by previous use had been occasional in nature, it is not considered that use as a shop and flats would be worse in terms of the potential to create noise and disturbance for local residents. Also, there is no reason to assume that a shop and flats on this site would exacerbate the situation in terms of anti-social behaviour than what was true when the club was open.

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- 5.10 In terms of the visual amenities of a neighbouring private property, it is accepted that the new building will be larger than the original building and it will be a more prominent feature in the townscape than the existing building, especially when looking from the rear of some of the houses in Tan y Coed. Having said that, given the urban nature of the area it is not considered that the design and size of this development is unsuitable for the location and its visual impact would not be unexpected in an estate with buildings of varying size and design such as Maesgeirchen.
- 5.11 Given the development pattern of the site and surrounding streets, the distance between the rear of the flats and Tan y Coed houses would be 27.5m, which is very similar to the distance between the houses that face each other along the Tan y Coed road. Bearing in mind the urban nature of the site and the distance between buildings, it is not considered that there would be unacceptable overlooking between these properties deriving from the development. Also, there is a wooded slope between buildings that already provides a very effective screen between Tan y Coed and the site.
- 5.12 Due to the distance of the development from the nearest houses, it is not considered that any other private property would suffer from any detrimental impact in terms of shadowing and loss of light.
- 5.13 The Public Protection Unit has raised the fact that air extraction systems could cause problems in terms of odours and noise for local residents. Details about the exact nature of the proposed café have not been included in the application but should an air extraction system be required, it would involve a development that would require a planning permission in itself and the implications of such a development could be considered when an appropriate application is submitted.
- 5.14 Although local concerns about the proposal are appreciated, the plan must be considered in the context of the site's urban location as well as its previous use. Consequently, and for the reasons above, it is believed that the development would not have an additional significant detrimental effect on the amenities of neighbouring residents and that the development would therefore be in-keeping with Policies B23 and B33 of the UDP which aim to protect the amenities of local residents.

Transport and access matters

- 5.15 To ensure that the parking and access arrangement is completed in accordance with submitted plans, the provision would meet the requirements of the Transportation Unit and it is therefore considered that the development complies with Policy CH33 and CH35 of the UDP. Given that the application site is in the centre of a housing estate that is served by a regular bus service, it is considered that the site is located in an accessible location for local residents in accordance with the requirements of Policy CH32 of the UDP.

Retail Matters

- 5.16 A Retail Report was submitted with the application and it notes the following points:
- That the current shopping provision in Maesgeirchen is insufficient for its population of approximately 4,000
 - A national commercial company (Costcutter Supermarket Group) agrees that the plan is viable
 - It is not considered that the Sequential Test is entirely relevant for this development as the development would not directly compete with shops in Bangor city centre and that its intention is to provide a community service for estate residents
 - It is likely that customers would do their "day to day" shop at the new store and this would not affect their weekly shop at their usual stores

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- 5.17 Policy D27 of the UDP approves proposals for new retail shops selling comparison goods and/or a facility or extensions to existing shops on sites within or in close proximity to a service centre but outside defined town centres noted on the Proposal Maps if they comply with all of the following the criteria:
1. that more floor area was required for comparison goods or a facility;
 2. that the sequential test showed that there was no other site that was more suitable, available or likely to become available;
 3. that the proposed development would not significantly harm the viability, vitality and attractiveness of defined town centres or other adjacent shopping centres;
 4. that the site is genuinely accessible to different modes of transport which means that customers and staff could reach the site without having to rely on private cars;
 5. that the development does not have a detrimental impact on travel patterns or creates an unacceptable increase in the use of the private cars;
 6. that there is a provision for refuse collections and recycling facilities on the site (in accordance with the scale and nature of the development).
- 5.18 The requirements of policy D27 are explicit and this is supported by Planning Policy Wales. The relatively small size of the development does not justify submitting a full commercial impact assessment (in accordance with the UDP and TAN 4), but the policy requires the developer to prove the need and to assess the likely impact of the development by using the sequential approach. From this perspective, policy C2 of the UDP is also relevant. Paragraph 10.3.4 of Planning Policy Wales states that, in the relation to an use that is essential to town centres, developers should be able to demonstrate that all possible options in the town centre, and the options on the outskirts of the centre, have been addressed thoroughly using the sequential approach of selecting a site before considering sites outside the town centre. The developer's responsibility is to prove that more central sites have been thoroughly assessed.
- 5.19 As seen above, the applicant has addressed the requirements of policy D27 and the proposed development is discussed below in the context of the criteria within that policy in turn:
1. The existing shopping range within Maesgeirchen includes:
 - Post office
 - Small newsagent / convenience goods store
 - Chip shop
 - Chinese takeaway shop
 - Launderette

The estate currently has small shops and has no mini supermarket facility which is similar to the one in question. In terms of its population size and the fact that it is physically separate from the rest of the city, Maesgeirchen is more or less a separate town, and given the information submitted with the application, there is no reason to doubt the logic of the Retail Report which states that there is currently an under-provision of shopping facilities within the estate.
 2. The Retail Report explains the logic why it would not be appropriate to seek a site closer to the city centre. And indeed, given that this is a site that has become available at random, and that it is approximately 2km from Bangor's Main Shopping Area (following public roads), it is considered that this would only be a development for the Maesgeirchen Estate and that impact (if any) on city centre shops would be very minimal.
 3. Due to the type of shop, its separate location in the centre of a housing estate and its distance from Bangor city centre, it is not considered that the development would have any significant impact on a defined town centre or another adjacent shopping centre. There is a possibility that other shops which already exist on the

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estate will be affected but commercial competition between individual businesses is not a planning consideration.

4. Because of its location in the centre of a housing estate which is served by a regular bus service, it is considered that the site is very accessible for different modes of transport and that it would not over-depend on customers who use private cars.
 5. It is considered that the probability of any change in travel patterns will only be within the Maesgeirchen estate and no significant change in use of private cars is expected to derive from the development.
 6. The provision of separate refuse collection facilities for the business are shown in the submitted plans.
- 5.20 It is considered unlikely that people would walk from the town centre to the shop or from the shop to the town centre due to the distance between them and the fact that there is no visible link between the site and the existing shops. According to the definitions of TAN 4, this site could be considered as an out-of-centre site, namely a location that stands clearly separate to the town centre, but not necessarily outside the urban area. On this basis, it is considered that the development is unlikely to be detrimental to the current convenience stores in the centre of Bangor and that it would not significantly change the travel patterns of the residents of Bangor.
- 5.21 Considering the above, it is believed that the retail element of this proposal meets the requirements of policy D27 of the UDP.

Housing Matters

- 5.22 Policy CH3 of the Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan is supportive of the principle of developing dwelling units on unallocated sites within the development boundary of Bangor Sub-regional Centre. In this case, it is proposed to redevelop a previously used site in accordance with Policy C3, providing 10 one-bedroom flats. The site is at the centre of a housing estate and there are no planning reasons for refusing the principle of providing more living units in this location.
- 5.23 Policy CH6 of the UDP asks for affordable units to be provided on all dwelling unit sites that become available within the development boundary of the Sub-regional Centre that will have more than 5 units unless it would not be appropriate to do so.
- 5.24 The Market Housing Assessment that was submitted with the application alleges that there is a shortage in the local housing market of one-bedroom units for individuals or couples who want to take their first steps into the housing market. The prices of such units in other parts of Bangor are high due to the high demand from students and the prices of flats currently for sale are between £90,00 and £120,000. Due to their inconvenient location for the University, it is not anticipated that units proposed as part of this application will be attractive for students and that the local market would be the main target for the flats. Sale prices are expected to be between £50,000 to £60,000 and should it be decided to let the flats rather than selling them, rents are expected to be 80% less than the market price for Bangor in general. Bearing in mind the size and location of these flats, prices are not expected to increase beyond the reach of local residents and therefore, it is not considered that a formal arrangement is required to ensure the affordability of the units.
- 5.25 Generally, the site is considered suitable for living units and these flats would meet local demand in an affordable manner. The site is accessible and expected residential services and facilities are available locally. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of policies C3, CH3 and CH6 discussed above.

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Linguistic Matters

- 5.26 In accordance with the requirements of Supplementary Planning Guidance - Planning and the Welsh Language, a Community and Linguistic Statement was submitted to accompany the application. It concludes that it is likely that residents of the flats will come from the local community and that their linguistic structure would reflect what exists already in the Maesgeirchen estate. Bearing in mind the size and location of the proposed development, it is not believed that the scale of the proposed development is likely to cause a significant growth in the population that could have a detrimental impact on the Welsh language in the community of Maesgeirchen nor in the city of Bangor. Therefore, it is considered that the development is in line with the objectives of Policy A2 of the UDP which aims to protect the social and linguistic cohesion of local communities.

Response to the public consultation

- 5.27 Several objections to the plan were received and some of them, such as private legal agreements and business competition, are not planning considerations. The above discussion considers the main planning matters that were raised but other matters that were raised are also relevant. One involves an allegation that land in Tan y Coed, which is on the top of the slope to the rear of the site, is unstable and is subsiding. Policy B28 of the UDP encourages refusing proposals that are close to unstable land; however, no robust evidence has been submitted to support the allegation of land instability and none of the official agencies who were consulted with have raised the matter in their responses. Any development must go through the Building Control process to ensure its safety and ultimately, ensuring that construction work is completed in a safe manner and that there is no damage to the interests of neighbours during the process of working on the land is a matter for the developer.
- 5.28 Concern was also expressed regarding the proposal to open the shop for 24 hours a day. Given the authorised use of the site as a social club with no planning condition restricting its hours, it is not considered that problems that could derive from the shop are likely to be worse than those caused by a social club and therefore, there is no planning reason for imposing a condition restricting opening times in this case.
- 5.29 On the whole, it is considered that the use and design of the building and the likely effects on amenities are acceptable in terms of the Unitary Development Plan policies, especially considering the existing legal use of the site. All material planning considerations that were raised by objectors have been duly addressed when determining this application; however, this has not changed the recommendation.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 Taking the abovementioned assessment into account, it is believed that the proposal to demolish the existing social club building and construct a three-storey building with a shop on the ground floor and 10 one-bedroom flats above is acceptable in terms of use, location, setting, design, materials, scale and potential impacts on the area's general amenities and the amenities of individuals. It is therefore considered that this proposal satisfies the requirements of relevant local and national policies that are noted in the report.

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 To approve subject to conditions:
1. Five years
 2. In accordance with the plans
 3. External finish of the building
 4. Highways / Parking conditions

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5. Limit the surface area of the cafe counter and seating area (to ensure that it is sub-standard to the shop)
6. Work to be undertaken in accordance with the Demolition Method Statement
7. Condition to limit demolition and construction work to 09:00-18:00 Monday - Friday, 09:00-13:00 Saturday, and not at all on Sunday and Bank Holidays.

Notes

1. Highways notes
2. Public Protection notes regarding air extractors