

Noise from major construction sites

Major construction sites generate significant levels of noise. Construction works include the demolition, maintenance, repair, erection, construction of buildings or roads and any work of engineering construction.

Much of the noise generated is unavoidable and noise control methods are a balancing act between the needs of the developer to carry out the works and the rights of neighbours to quiet enjoyment of their properties. The legislation governing noise from construction sites strives to achieve this balance. The Council aims to minimise the impact of noise from such works on local residents.

The main control that the Council can impose on construction sites is to limit the times during which they are permitted to make noise that their neighbours can hear.

For general construction works the Council usually imposes (when necessary) the following limits on noisy works:

- **Monday to Friday** - 8am to 6pm
- **Saturdays** - 8am to 1pm
- **Sundays and Bank Holidays** - No noisy activities allowed

Some particularly noisy activities, such as pile driving, may be subject to stricter time controls to allow neighbours some relief from excessive noise.

On the other hand, some activities may be allowed outside of normal working hours when there is a good reason for this to happen. This might be for health and safety reasons or because the particular operation cannot be completed within the time normally allowed. A good example of this would be large-scale concrete pours for floors that need to be finished by power floating when the concrete has partially dried – there is no way this job can be completed inside a normal working day.

The council usually only imposes time limits on construction sites when they are causing problems for residents. It is, therefore, very important that you let us know if you are being disturbed by noise from construction.

It is worth remembering that it is not the work that is being restricted, but noise from the work. If the work is not disturbing anyone, then the Council does not need to impose restrictions on that work. This means that quiet work could go on at almost any time of the day.

The council can also set maximum noise levels at particular locations. Chosen locations are normally outside of the nearest noise sensitive properties to the construction activities. The developer is required to take noise measurements at our chosen locations (usually twice daily), the results of which are forwarded to the council on a weekly basis. In the event of the maximum level being exceeded, the developer is required to take action to lower the noise level. All such actions must be recorded and the details immediately forwarded to the council.

The other method we use to control noise from construction sites is to require that all contractors use the “best practical means” to minimise noise from their activities. This is a very broad area and can include matters ranging from the prohibition of the use of radios on site to the proper maintenance of plant and equipment. It can also include matters such as the choice of appropriate plant for a particular task or putting up noise barriers or screens.

Poorly maintained plant and equipment can give rise to excessive noise and the failure to use the built-in noise control shielding on plant can cause problems.

The use of mains powered electrical equipment is encouraged (rather than using generators) and hydraulic breaking or bursting techniques are preferable to impact breaking methods for demolition.

The choice of equipment for a particular task is important in noise reduction. For example, bored piling is usually a lot less disturbing than hammered piling. We therefore insist on the use of bored piles whenever possible – but sometimes it is necessary to use hammered piling techniques for engineering reasons.

The use of “best practical means” to control noise from construction works is a complicated issue and further details about this matter can be found in our advice to contractors. Ask us for a copy of our “Construction Site Code of Practice”.

If you want to make a complaint about noise from a construction site, then call the Greenwich Noise Line on 020 8921 8921. For more information, contact the Environmental Protection Team at:

Environmental Protection Team

Community Safety and Management

Royal Borough of Greenwich

The Woolwich Centre,

35 Wellington Street,

London SE18 6HQ

Email: environmental.protection@greenwich.gov.uk

Tel: 020 8921 8166 or 8167