

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION DEVELOPMENT IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS



Exeter City Council

FEBRUARY 2008

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1 STATUS OF DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This supplementary planning guidance (SPG) was agreed by the Council's Executive on 11 February 2008. This followed a public consultation on draft guidance in Autumn 2007. A copy of the report to Executive on the results of the consultation is at <http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.asp?CId=112&MId=1636&Ver=4>

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The University of Exeter expects to have around 12,000 full-time equivalent students in Exeter in 2008/9 on the Streatham and St Luke's campuses. It expects this to increase to some 15,000 students by 2015/6 (See <http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/be/estatestrategy.shtml>).
- 2.2 About 2,000 of the existing students are assumed to live at home in Exeter or nearby, about 4,000 in University controlled accommodation either on or off campus and about 6,000 in the private rented sector. There are about 1,200 homes in the City that are exempt from Council Tax because they are entirely occupied by students. Many of these properties are concentrated in areas close to Streatham Campus. 67 of the 102 homes in Victoria Street were exempt from Council Tax in April 2007.
- 2.3 There are also students in the city associated with other academic institutions. Students make up over 10% of the total population, much more in certain areas.
- 2.4 Local residents frequently express concerns about late night noise and disturbance and car parking associated with students. Such problems are however not unique to this sector of the population. The presence of a proportion of students can contribute to the diversity of local communities. However, there may be occasions where there are concentrations in such numbers that may have adverse effects on the mix and balance of a community. For example, large numbers of properties may be vacant outside of term times. The proposed approach in this guidance is justified on grounds of maintaining a mixed community throughout the year rather than problems such as noise, rubbish and car parking that are not unique to students.

3 PLANNING CONTROLS ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

- 3.1 There are limitations to the ability of the planning system to control the occupancy of properties by students. Up to six people can live in a house as a single household without the need for planning permission. The Council cannot control the acquisition of homes and their use as student accommodation.

- 3.2 The Council does have planning control over material changes of use of homes to other forms of accommodation such as houses in multi occupation (HMOs). These may be occupied by students or often other low income or transient people. Only a small proportion of HMOs (those that are three or more storeys high, have five or more people in one household and share amenities such as bathrooms, toilets and cooking facilities) are required by law to be licensed by the Head of Environmental Health Services. Licences are granted on the basis of standards relating to issues such as safety and cannot be refused on grounds of the concentration in an area.
- 3.3 New purpose-built student accommodation is normally in the form of cluster flats that share communal kitchen/lounge facilities or studios. These are usually limited to occupation by students only and may have lower standards of residential amenity than properties designed for longer-term occupation.
- 3.4 The development, conversion or extension of ordinary dwellings may be in a form that is clearly intended for student use, such as extensions to provide a large number of bedrooms, with or without en suite facilities and proposals for very large rooms that are capable of future subdivision.
- 3.5 Proposals that require planning permission may take the following forms:
- New developments, extensions or conversions into student hall accommodation
 - Construction, extension or changes of use to HMO accommodation.
 - New dwellings, conversions or changes of use to dwellings that have an internal design that may be intended for student occupation.
 - Extensions of existing dwellings where there is evidence of occupation by students.
- 3.6 Changes of use from family dwellings to student occupation is likely to have most impact upon the character and balance of a community because of the loss of other age groups as well as the introduction of more students. It is proposed to restrict further student accommodation in all these forms in areas where there is considered to be an over concentration of students.

4 POLICY JUSTIFICATION FOR PLANNING CONTROL

- 4.1 The law requires that planning decisions be in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The main part of the development plan relevant to student accommodation is criterion (b) of policy H5 of the adopted Exeter Local Plan. This states:

H5: THE CONVERSION OF DWELLINGS TO FLATS, SELF-CONTAINED BEDSITTERS OR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS OR STUDENT HOUSING WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT:

....

(b) THE PROPOSAL WILL NOT CREATE AN OVER CONCENTRATION OF THE USE IN ANY ONE AREA OF THE CITY

WHICH WOULD CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF THE
NEIGHBOURHOOD OR CREATE AN IMBALANCE IN THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY;

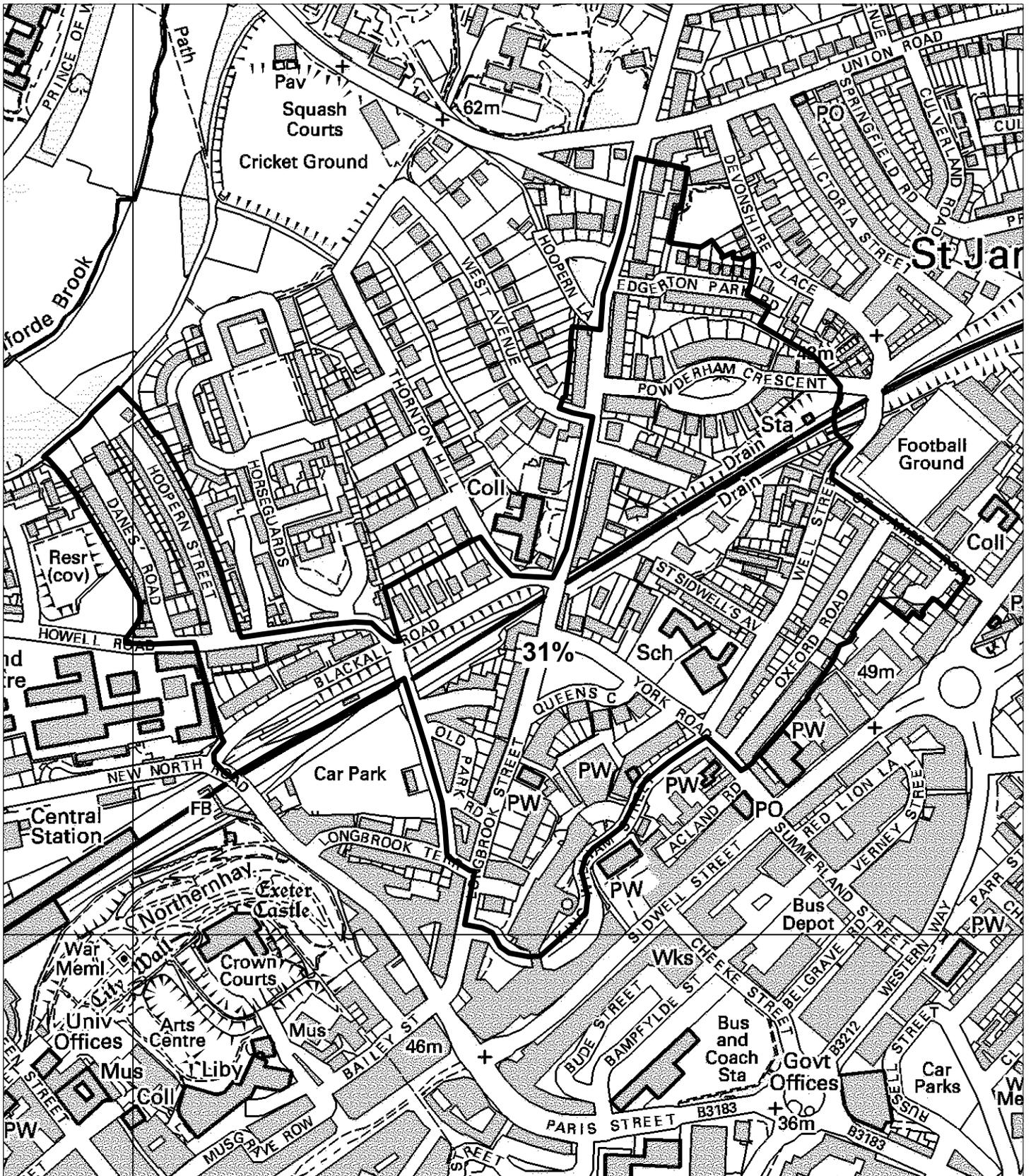
....

5 AREA TO BE SUBJECT TO RESTRICTION

- 5.1 The Council proposes that, for the purpose of interpreting policy H5(b), the three areas on the attached plans have an existing concentration of students such that further student accommodation developments would adversely affect the character of the neighbourhood or create an imbalance in the local community. All forms of additional student accommodation that require planning permission will be resisted in these areas.
- 5.2 The three areas identified all have over 25% of homes that are exempt from Council Tax at April 2007 owing to entire occupation by students. All the areas have been subject to concerns expressed by local residents that high numbers of students are adversely affecting the community.

6 FURTHER INFORMATION

- 6.1 Further information on planning issues relating to students in Exeter can be found in the following report to the Council's Planning Committee in December 2006:
- [http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20Committee/20061211/Agenda/\\$item%2004.doc.pdf](http://committees.exeter.gov.uk/Data/Planning%20Committee/20061211/Agenda/$item%2004.doc.pdf)
- 6.2 If you wish to discuss the issues or seek further information please contact:
- Nick Bickford on 01392 265283 or nick.bickford@exeter.gov.uk
Jill Day on 01392 265615 or jill.day@exeter.gov.uk



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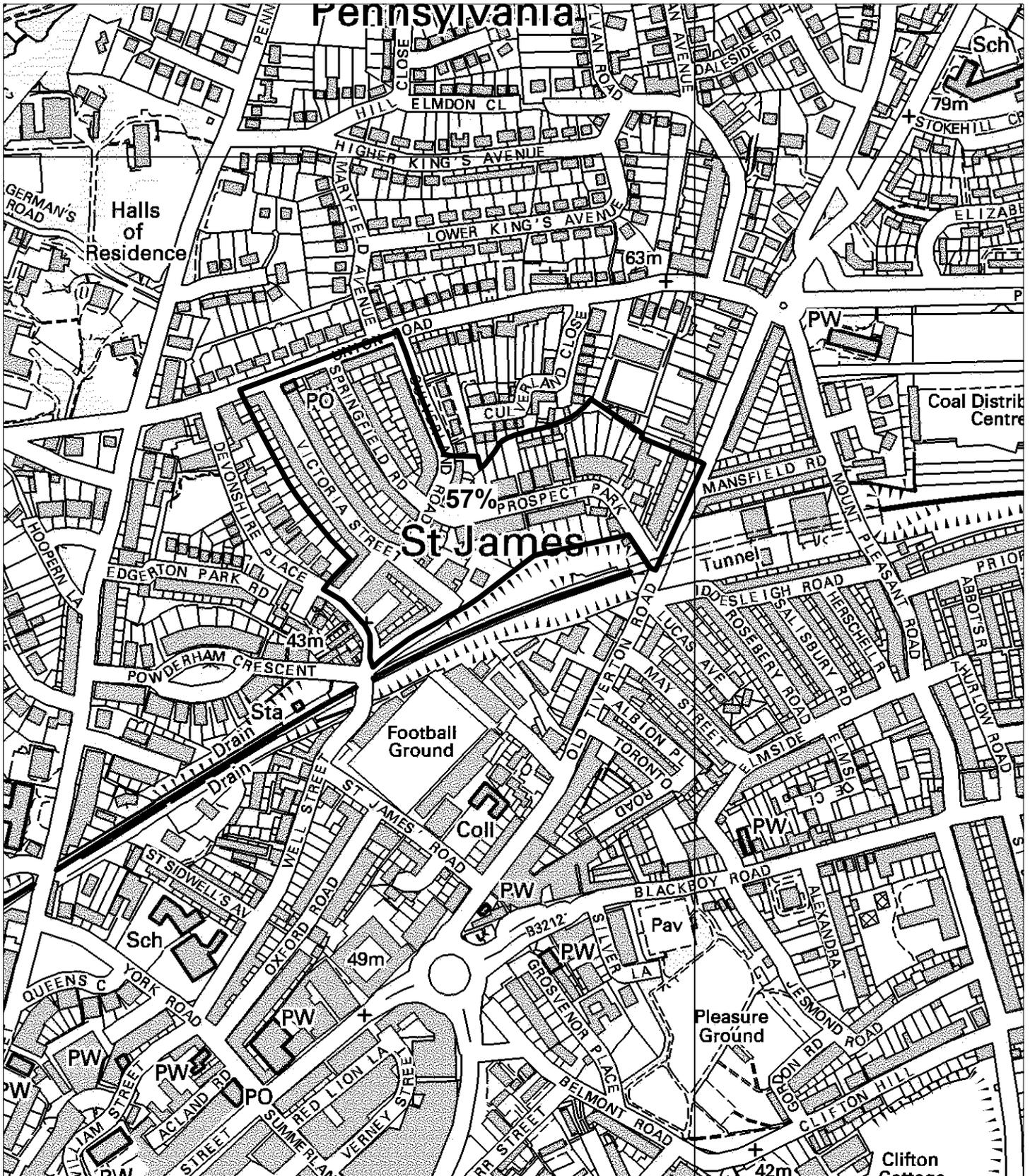
Proportion of student properties exempt from Council Tax (April 2007)

Planning Services, Exeter City Council, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter, EX1 1NN

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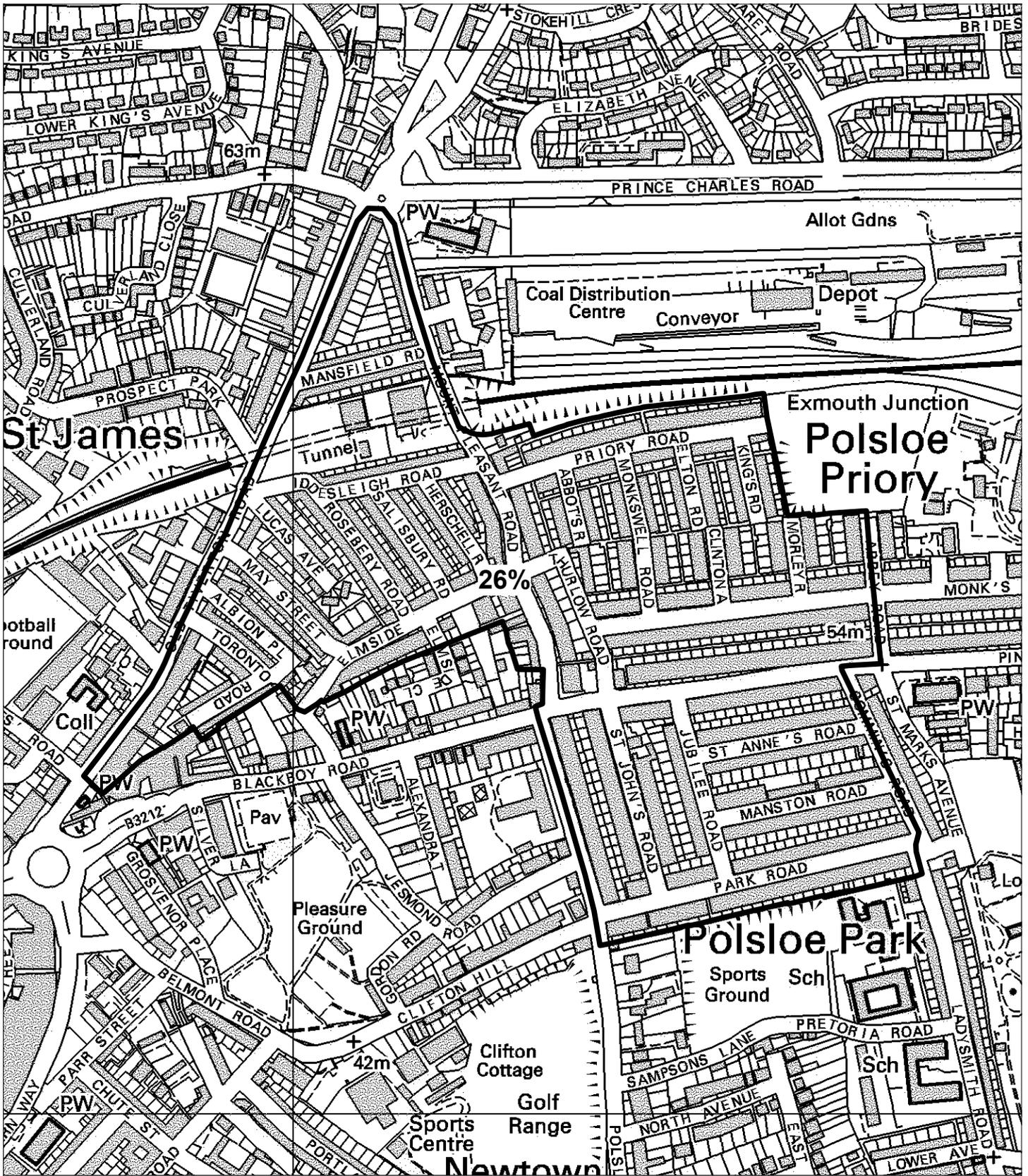
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