

# Broads Authority Local Compliance and Enforcement Plan



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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Compliance and Enforcement Plan explains the planning enforcement process and how it works in the Broads Authority executive area. It is a guide for those who may be affected by breaches of planning control and sets out:
  - (a) what the Broads Authority can do and the timescales involved
  - (b) how the public, local communities and other stakeholders can help the Authority in monitoring against unauthorised development
  - (c) what services the Authority will provide, and the service standards the public can expect.
- 1.2 The Broads Authority produced its first Local Compliance and Enforcement Plan in 2016. This was reviewed and updated in 2020 and 2022. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023) (LURA) brought in a number of changes which directly impact on planning enforcement and this version of the Local Compliance and Enforcement Plan has been updated to include these.
- 1.3 The enforcement of planning control is designed to make sure that any development that takes place has the necessary planning permissions and that, where development is permitted, it is built and used in accordance with those planning permissions. Enforcement is an important part of the planning system and protects our landscape and built environment against damaging change. It is also important to local communities and other stakeholders, as it affects how their area is developed and ensures a level playing field for everyone concerned.
- 1.4 The Government recognises the importance of effective planning enforcement. National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and paragraph 60 says:

“Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system. Enforcement action is discretionary, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control. They should consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively, in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development, and take action where appropriate.”

## 2 Planning and the law

2.1 The planning system deals with development, which is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), as:

“The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.” (Section 55)

2.2 This is a wide description and the Act gives more detail on its interpretation. Broadly, development falls into two types – one is physical structures or alterations, and the other is a material change in the use of land or buildings.

2.3 A planning breach is defined in section 171A of the Act as:

- the carrying out of development without the required planning permission; or
- failing to comply with any condition or limitation subject to which planning permission has been granted.

2.4 Examples of planning control breaches include:

- Building works carried out without planning permission
- A change in the use of a site or building without planning permission
- Conditions on a planning consent that have not been complied with. This includes checking that occupancy conditions that restrict the residential use to holiday use or to agricultural workers.
- Development that has not been built in accordance with the approved plans
- The display of adverts without consent (where they do not benefit from deemed or express consent)
- The demolition of walls and buildings within a Conservation Area without planning permission
- Internal and external works to Listed Buildings without Listed Building Consent
- Works undertaken to a tree within a Conservation Area or to a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) without permission
- Land raising, where this is an engineering operation, without planning permission

2.5 It is important to note that if works are not classed as ‘development’ in the legislation then they do not fall within the scope of planning control.

2.6 The point at which something becomes ‘development’ is not always straightforward, particularly where there is a change of use. The legislation states that development will have occurred when the change is ‘material’, which can be defined broadly as being significant or having impacts. When considering whether or not a change is ‘material’, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will look at any change in the character of the use (including the land where it is), and the effects of the change on neighbouring uses and the locality. The point at which a change becomes ‘material’ will be a matter of fact and degree and will usually involve an

element of judgement.

- 2.7 The law gives all LPAs specific legal powers to deal with breaches of planning control, including powers of investigation and powers to take formal legal action to correct breaches of planning control. These powers are set out in The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended). The LPA also has powers under other legislation to deal with unlawful advertisements. (The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007) and unlawful works to protected trees.
- 2.8 There is a duty on LPAs to investigate alleged breaches of planning control, but the requirement to take action is discretionary. In deciding what action to take when a planning breach has occurred, the LPA must exercise its powers carefully and with proportion, and there are clear guiding principles on this.
- 2.9 It is important to note that the legislation says that an LPA cannot take enforcement action against unauthorised development after a certain period. The ‘start date’ for this period commences when the development has been ‘substantially completed’. The length of the period required to acquire immunity is outlined in Table 1 below;

**Table 1 - Length of the period required for immunity to be acquired**

|  | Before 25 April 2024 | On or after 25 April 2024 |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Operational development                  | 4 years              | 10 years                  |
| Change of use to a single dwelling house | 4 years              | 10 years                  |
| Other changes of use                     | 10 years             | 10 years                  |

### 3 Guiding principles of planning enforcement

- 3.1 When a breach of planning control has taken place, the LPA will look carefully at a number of factors when considering what action is appropriate.
- 3.2 The first factor is **expediency**. This is about assessing the harm being caused by the breach. Harm may arise through a range or combination of issues, such as:
- Adverse impact on visual amenity due to poor design or materials
  - Adverse impact on neighbouring amenity due to noise, overlooking or loss of privacy
  - Inappropriate or conspicuous development that has an adverse impact on a protected landscape or Conservation Area
  - Loss of protected trees
- 3.3 The LPA must ensure any enforcement action is commensurate with the breach of planning control to which it relates. Enforcement action will not normally be taken to remedy trivial or technical breaches of control which are considered to cause no harm to amenity or harm to the public interest. The LPA will also need to consider the impacts and costs of taking action, including the available resources and what is likely to be achieved. If there is little harm it may not be expedient to pursue the matter, particularly if the costs are high.
- 3.4 The second factor is **proportionality**. Enforcement action should always be proportionate to the seriousness of the harm being caused. It should not be taken solely to 'regularise' development that is otherwise acceptable on its planning merits, but for which planning permission has not been sought. The Courts have been clear that the role of the enforcement system is to secure compliance, not to punish.
- 3.5 The third factor is **consistency**. It is important to take a similar approach to similar cases to achieve similar outcomes. This provides reliability for local communities and other stakeholders and allows them to know what to expect from the LPA.
- 3.6 While the legislation gives the LPA strong legal powers to deal with breaches of planning control, in most cases the first approach is to use **negotiation** to reach a satisfactory resolution in a timely manner. Negotiations often result in a mutually agreeable solution more quickly than formal action. Still, they should proceed in a timely and committed manner and should not be allowed to delay a formal resolution of the planning breach.

## 4 The importance of enforcing planning control in the Broads

- 4.1 The Norfolk and Suffolk Broads is a protected landscape of national and international importance, with a status equivalent to a national park. It is Britain's finest wetland, with a network of meandering rivers and shallow lakes ('broads') that make it a unique area, precious for its rich wildlife and 'big sky' landscapes, as well as a popular destination for visitors. The villages and settlements reflect the area's traditional building styles and materials and have a distinctive and valued vernacular. The Broads Authority has a duty to manage the Broads and is the LPA for the Broads executive area.
- 4.2 Development is carefully managed in the Broads. The Broads Authority places strong emphasis on investigating and remedying breaches of planning control, due to the impact that unauthorised development can have on the area's character and qualities, and to demonstrate its commitment to protecting this important landscape. Protecting the integrity of the planning system and demonstrating that breaches of planning control will not be tolerated is also important.
- 4.3 We prioritise cases according to the degree of harm being caused, with highest priority given to cases where the harm (or the potential for harm) is greatest.

**Table 2 - Priority status for consideration of planning control breaches**

| Priority level | Details of priority status  |
|----------------|---|
| Priority One   | Development causing serious threat to public health and safety, or permanent, serious damage to the natural or built environment. This would apply particularly where a breach is affecting an SSSI, the water environment or navigation, a Listed Building, Ancient Monument, tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order or any breach which would damage the character of a Conservation Area. An example might be the unauthorised demolition of a listed building. |
| Priority Two   | Development causing threat to public health and safety, or serious damage to the natural or built environment. This is considered harmful, but with the potential to get worse. An example might be the commencement of the construction of an unauthorised and unacceptable extension to a listed building.  |
| Priority Three | This covers the majority of cases, where there is a possible breach, but the damage is unlikely to be serious and it is unlikely to get worse. An example might be the construction of an unauthorised extension to a non-listed building.  |

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Priority Four | This covers less serious or urgent cases. An example might be the construction of an outbuilding. |
|---------------|---|

4.4 Some matters are not breaches of planning control, and the LPA does not deal with these. These may include boundary disputes between neighbours, which are a legal or civil issue, or matters around a building's structure or safety, which is covered by Building Regulations. Public nuisances such as light, noise or odour pollution are covered by the Environmental Health Teams at the relevant District Council. Fly-tipping is usually a matter for the Environment Agency or the relevant District Council.



## 5 Dealing with planning breaches in the Broads

- 5.1 The Broads Authority has a standard procedure for dealing with enforcement matters. This ensures that breaches are dealt with in a consistent and timely manner, proportionate to the potential for harm. While this is a standard approach, the progress of any investigation and the timescales will vary depending on the nature of the breach, the harm being caused and the actions and response of the landowner or operator.

### Checking the breach

- 5.2 When a complaint or report of a suspected breach of planning control is received by the Authority's planning department, it will carry out initial checks, including whether or not development has occurred, a planning history or if permitted development rights are relevant.

### Initial investigation and site visit

- 5.3 If the initial investigation confirms a case should be raised; the owner will be contacted to discuss the matter and arrange a visit if necessary. An unaccompanied visit may be carried out using powers afforded to the LPA by the 1990 Act.

### Following the site visit

- 5.4 Following the site visit or meeting, if there is no planning breach, the case will be closed and the complainant informed. If a planning breach is found, the LPA has the following options, depending on the breach:
- if the development is acceptable and would be likely to get planning permission, the landowner or operator will be asked to apply for retrospective planning permission;
  - if the development could be made acceptable and would be likely to get planning permission if amended, the landowner or operator will be asked to make the amendments and then apply for retrospective planning permission;
  - If the development is not acceptable and is incapable of being made acceptable, the landowner or operator will be asked to remove the unauthorised development or cease the unauthorised use.

- 5.5 The landowner or operator will be given a timescale for each of the above options, and these will vary depending on the scale of the development and the seriousness of the breach. For example, for a serious breach where irrevocable harm is being caused, immediate cessation would be required, while for a retrospective application to remedy a minor change, a period of 28 days to submit a planning application would be appropriate.

- 5.6 The LPA's approach is to negotiate a solution wherever possible. When the LPA asks for information to be submitted or action to be taken, the LPA will expect this

to be done within the timescale given, or a request for further time to be made promptly with an explanation for the delay. The LPA will not enter into lengthy or cyclical correspondence, as this delays resolution and is not an effective use of our resources.

#### Submitting a retrospective planning application

- 5.7 In many cases, the unauthorised development that has taken place is either acceptable or can be made acceptable. In these cases, an application will be invited to regularise the breach of planning. Should one not be received, but the LPA considers that a condition is required, an enforcement warning notice can be served. This gives the applicant more time to resolve the matter. This notice does not preclude the service of a further enforcement notice if necessary. It has the advantage of resetting the time period that would allow the breach to become exempt from action.
- 5.8 The approval of a retrospective application enables the LPA to impose conditions on the development, and this is a mechanism for mitigating harm and gaining benefits, such as additional tree planting. The LPA would consider this to be a successful outcome, as the development will be authorised and harm controlled.
- 5.9 It should be noted that while retrospective applications may be unpopular with local communities, who may see the landowner or operator as having ‘got away with it’, they are allowed in law. The Courts have been clear that LPAs should not use the planning process to punish.
- 5.10 Where a landowner or operator declines to submit a retrospective application and there are no issues which need to be controlled through planning condition, the LPA will have to consider the appropriateness of enforcement action, taking into account the guiding principles of expediency, proportionality and consistency.
- 5.11 Where the unauthorised development is unacceptable and is incapable of being made acceptable, the LPA will not request a retrospective application as this is inappropriate and will delay the resolution of the matter. However, the LPA cannot prevent the owner submitting an application. It is common practice to allow the application to be determined before taking formal action – unless the harm caused is significant and irrevocable.
- 5.12 Where a retrospective application is refused, formal enforcement action will follow as soon as is practicable, ideally an Enforcement Notice would be served in conjunction with the refusal decision notice.

#### Taking formal enforcement action

- 5.13 Where harm is being caused, it is necessary to consider formal enforcement action. The legislation gives LPAs wide ranging powers to deal with breaches of planning

control, and the regularly used powers are summarised below. A full list and further details are in Appendix 2.

- 5.14 The Broads Authority has a Scheme of Powers Delegated to officers, which identifies the level at which decisions may be made and delegates powers to specific officers of the Authority.
- 5.15 The Scheme of Delegated Powers allows officers to investigate and process enforcement cases, including serving requisitions for information and Breach of Condition Notices. The authority for taking formal enforcement action remains with the Planning Committee, although provision is made for decisions to be taken at officer level in cases of urgency.

#### Types of formal enforcement action

- 5.16 The law gives an LPA a wide range of powers relating to planning enforcement and these are explained below.
- 5.17 A planning **Enforcement Notice** is a formal notice used to remedy a breach of planning control. It identifies the planning breach and the harm being caused, and lists what the landowner or operator must do to remedy the breach. An Enforcement Notice comes into effect a minimum of 28 days after service, with the period set by the LPA, and there is a period given for compliance. Failure to comply with an Enforcement Notice is a criminal offence. There is a right of appeal against an Enforcement Notice.
- 5.18 When an appeal is made against an Enforcement Notice, the requirements of the notice are held in abeyance pending the outcome of the appeal. The decision on an appeal will take time and can often delay proceedings, particularly if the matter is dealt with through a Public Inquiry. If the appeal does not succeed, the Enforcement Notice comes into effect. If the appeal is successful then this is normally the end of the matter.
- 5.19 The LPA serves Enforcement Notices where negotiations have failed to achieve an acceptable resolution within a reasonable period or where it appears unlikely that resolution can be achieved informally.
- 5.20 There is a separate Listed Building Enforcement Notice which operates in the same way as a planning Enforcement Notice.
- 5.21 Where the breach of planning control relates to non-compliance with a planning condition, an LPA can serve a **Breach of Condition Notice**, which requires compliance with the relevant condition. Failure to comply with a Breach of Condition Notice is a criminal offence. There is no right of appeal against a Breach of Condition Notice but a challenge may be made to the Courts.
- 5.22 The law gives an LPA the power to serve a **Stop Notice**, there is a separate Listed

Building Stop Notice. This is a notice which can require operations or use of land (other than as a dwelling) to cease within a specified period usually between 3 and 56 days. A Stop Notice cannot be served independently of an Enforcement Notice; it can be served at the same time as or after the Enforcement Notice is served. Failure to comply with a Stop Notice is a criminal offence.

- 5.23 Although, there is no right of appeal against a Stop Notice in some circumstances an LPA can be liable to pay compensation if the related Enforcement Notice is subsequently quashed, so authorities normally only serve Stop Notices where a development is particularly unneighbourly or otherwise causes significant harm.
- 5.24 A **Temporary Stop Notice**, however, takes immediate effect and persists for up to 56 days. A Temporary Stop Notice can be served on its own, or with other Enforcement Notices. There is a separate Listed Building Temporary Stop Notice. Failure to comply with a Temporary Stop Notice is a criminal offence. There is no right of appeal against a Temporary Stop Notice.
- 5.25 The LPA uses Stop Notices and Temporary Stop Notices in urgent cases where there is serious and/or irrevocable harm being caused to an important interest, such as a local amenity, the Broads' navigation or the landscape. When serving a Stop Notice an LPA must first undertake a cost/benefit assessment to demonstrate expediency. Stop Notices can be a very effective tool and Temporary Stop Notices are used in urgent cases to support them. A Temporary Stop Notice on its own is also a very useful tool to provide an immediate and temporary cessation of an unauthorised activity or operation and allow time to obtain information or evidence on the impact of the planning breach.
- 5.26 The LPA recognises that Enforcement Notices, Breach of Condition Notices, Stop Notices and Temporary Stop Notices are all serious notices and it exercises its power carefully and with proportionality in their use.

#### Following up formal enforcement action

- 5.27 In the majority of cases where it is necessary to take formal enforcement action, the use of an Enforcement Notice will prompt actions on behalf of the landowner or operator to remedy the planning breach. Unfortunately, there are occasions where this does not happen, and the LPA has to pursue the matter further to remedy the breach and maintain public confidence in the planning system.
- 5.28 The Authority will consider prosecution where there has been non-compliance with an Enforcement Notice.
- 5.29 The Authority will consider taking direct action where this appears to offer the only realistic opportunity to secure compliance with planning legislation. The Authority will seek to reclaim the costs of direct action from the landowner or operator and will pursue this through the Magistrates Court if necessary.

## 6 Preventing breaches of planning control in the Broads

- 6.1 The LPA has a proactive condition monitoring programme, through which it checks that development is undertaken in accordance with the approved plans and planning conditions. There is a regular monitoring schedule and planning permissions for major developments, development that affects listed buildings and all development that has been authorised by Planning Committee are checked at least three times a year. Monitoring takes place at the start of the development and, where appropriate, at subsequent development stages. The LPA will carry out site visits, sometimes unannounced, to check that the development is in accordance with the approved plans and planning conditions.
- 6.2 Information is also received from Parish Councils, Building Control teams and other stakeholders notifying us of development that is underway. The public also plays a vital role in reporting breaches of planning control, and all reports or complaints about development are investigated, subject to passing the initial screening process shown at paragraph 5.2 above.
- 6.3 As breaches in planning control often require significant evidence gathering, it is always helpful if a complainant provides as much information as possible at the initial contact, including:
- the address of the property or location of the land concerned
  - the name of the person or company involved
  - details of the suspected breach, with times and dates if relevant
  - how the breach affects the area, or any problems caused by the breach.
- 6.4 Contact details of the complainant are also required to process a complaint or report so that progress updates can be given. Anonymous complaints will not normally be dealt with. All complaints or reports of unauthorised development are treated as confidential, but Freedom of Information requests and Court Orders may require the provision of information, so confidentiality cannot be completely guaranteed.
- 6.5 Complaints or reports of unauthorised development that appear to be malicious or based on discrimination will not be dealt with.

## 7 Our service standards and what you can expect from us

- 7.1 Getting involved with planning enforcement can be stressful, whether you are a concerned neighbour, a Parish Council, or someone who has undertaken development without planning permission. The Authority will aim to deal with all persons fairly and politely, in a timely manner. We will provide the appropriate level of advice and keep local people informed.
- 7.2 If you report a suspected planning breach or make a formal complaint to the Authority, this will be acknowledged within three working days. The matter will be investigated, and the Authority will update you within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint. The Authority will continue to update you regularly on the progress of the case until the matter is resolved.
- 7.3 Enforcement matters often take a long time to resolve. This may be due to:
- Continuing negotiation to try to resolve the matter
  - Consideration of a retrospective planning application seeking to remedy the breach
  - The gathering of sufficient, satisfactory and robust evidence in order to take action
  - Awaiting compliance with the requirements of a formal Notice
  - Awaiting the determination of an appeal against formal Notices.
- 7.4 It is understood that, in many cases, people who commit a planning breach do not do so deliberately. They may have thought that the works were not development or were covered by permitted development rights. The most effective way to make sure you avoid a breach in planning control is to check whether any works you propose require planning consent. You can do this by visiting the Planning Portal at [planningportal.gov.uk/permission](https://planningportal.gov.uk/permission) or by contacting a Planning Officer at the Broads Authority before undertaking the works.
- 7.5 If you have undertaken works without planning permission, the LPA will work with you to find a solution. The LPA will tell you in writing what the planning issue is and confirm its advice, as well as telling you what you need to do. The LPA will expect you to respond promptly, within any given timescales, and to engage constructively. The LPA will not engage in repetitive or cyclical correspondence, as this is not a good use of its resources.

## 8 Contact us

8.1 For more information please contact:

The Local Planning Authority  
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Email: [planning@broads-authority.gov.uk](mailto:planning@broads-authority.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1 – Enforcement Powers

**Table 3 - Enforcement powers available to a Local Planning Authority.**

| <b>Enforcement Power</b>               | <b>Description</b>   |
|--|--|
| Enforcement Notices                    | Enforcement Notices can be served on unauthorised development and uses where the development can be remedied by alteration, complete demolition or the ceasing of the unauthorised use. For these Notices there is a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. The service of an Enforcement Notice constitutes formal action for the purposes of the legislation.                                 |
| Listed Building Enforcement Notices    | Listed Building Enforcement Notices are served where unauthorised works to Listed Buildings have taken place and requirements are made to remove those works or improve upon their impact. For these Notices there is a right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.  |
| Breach of Condition Notices            | Breach of Condition Notices are served to require compliance with a condition attached to a planning permission. These notices are suitable for specific breaches of planning control that need to be corrected within a specified deadline. There is no right of appeal for these Notices. The service of a Breach of Condition Notice constitutes formal action for the purposes of the legislation. |
| Stop Notices                           | Stop Notices would normally be served in cases where the unauthorised development or use is considered to be so harmful that the outcome of the enforcement process could not be waited for. These will be served together with an Enforcement Notice. There is no right of appeal for these Notices.  |
| Temporary Stop Notices                 | Temporary Stop Notices are served where a harmful unauthorised development or use has occurred and needs to be stopped immediately. A Temporary Stop Notices can be in force for up to 56 days. This allows time for negotiation between us and offending parties. There is no right of appeal for these Notices.  |
| Listed Building Temporary Stop Notices | Listed Building Temporary Stop Notices are served where a development which does not have Listed Building Consent or is in breach of a condition(s) attached to an LBC has occurred and needs to be stopped immediately. A Listed Building Temporary Stop Notices can be in force for up to 56 days. This allows time for negotiation between us and offending parties.                                |
| Section 215 Notices                    | Section 215 Notices can be served on any interested party where land or buildings have become untidy and are considered by us to adversely affect the amenity of the area. There is a right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court for this Notice.   |



| <b>Enforcement Power</b>       | <b>Description</b>   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Enforcement Warning Notices    | Enforcement Warning Notices can be served where there has been a breach of planning control and there is a reasonable prospect that permission would be granted. The Enforcement Warning Notice must state that unless an application for planning permission is made within a period specified in the notice, further enforcement action may be taken. An Enforcement Warning Notice has the effect of 'resetting the clock' in terms acquiring immunity. The service of an Enforcement Warning Notice constitutes formal action for the purposes of the legislation.                             |
| Planning Contravention Notices | Planning Contravention Notices can be served on any known interested party where it is suspected that a breach of planning control has occurred. They contain a number of relevant questions relating to the alleged breach of planning control. Failure to respond within a specified timescale is a criminal offence which can result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.  |
| Section 330 Notices            | Section 330 Notices require information from any occupier of land asking what his interest is in it. Failure to respond within a specified timescale is a criminal offence which can result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.  |
| Section 225 Notices            | Section 225 Notices enable us to issue Notices on any interested parties against unauthorised advertisement displays on buildings and on other surfaces. Subject to these provisions, we will invoice the recipient of any such action in order to recover the costs that have been reasonably incurred in taking the action.  |
| Court                          | Prosecutions will be undertaken by us in incidences such as unauthorised works to Listed Buildings and protected trees, demolition in conservation areas, the display of advertisements and the failure to comply with the other notices listed in this plan.  |
| Injunctions                    | Injunctions are used where a breach of planning control is severe, or there is a threat of it becoming severe, and which can be halted by the successful application to the High Court (or County Court) for an Injunction. It will also be used in longstanding cases where the offender has failed to comply with an Enforcement Notice and the harm is ongoing and now needs to be brought to an end. We will always look to recover our costs from the offender when placed in the position of taking such action even if this results in placing a charge on the land to aid future recovery. |
| Direct Action                  | Direct Action will be used so we can ensure remedial works are undertaken to secure satisfactory compliance with an Enforcement Notice. In cases such as this it may also be necessary to apply for an Injunction to prohibit parties from entering the land during the period when direct action is taken. We will always look to recover our costs from the offender when placed in the position of taking such action even if this results in placing a charge on the land to aid future recovery.  |