Planning Enforcement

The Council exists to serve you and protect the environment. We aim to give the best possible service, balancing demands against the resources available to us. We have a dedicated Enforcement Team responsible for investigating alleged breaches of planning control.

What do we deal with?

Sometimes development is carried out without planning permission or is not carried out exactly in accordance with the detailed plans or conditions, which have been approved by the Council.

A key objective of the Planning Enforcement Service is that harmful activities are dealt with effectively where it is expedient to do so.

Matters which can be considered for planning enforcement include:

- Unauthorised material change of use to land or buildings.
- Unauthorised works to protected trees.
- Unauthorised advertisements.
- Unauthorised work to listed buildings.
- Unauthorised demolition of certain buildings within a Conservation Area.
- Works to certain sized trees within a Conservation Area.
- Land which adversely affects the amenity of the area.

These matters are dealt with on a priority basis:

**Priority One**

A serious threat to health and/or safety (e.g. traffic hazard, storage of hazardous substances, development creating pollution problems). Permanent damage to the environment (e.g. loss of protected tree, unauthorised work affecting the character of a listed building and some works within a Conservation Area).

**Priority Two**

Building work which is unlikely to be given planning permission without substantial modification (e.g. excessively large house extension).

**Priority Three**

A breach causing problems, which may be resolved by limited modification (e.g. insertion of opaque glass in an unauthorised window to overcome privacy problems, restrictions on hours of use etc.).

**Priority Four**

Breaches of a minor nature raising minimal planning concerns.

What information will the Council need?

The more information you can give the Council the better. Officers will visit the site but will only be present for a relatively short space of time therefore your observations may be crucial.

All initial reports are dealt with in confidence and your details will not be made known without your agreement.

The Council will not act upon anonymous reports unless there is a serious risk to health and safety or serious demonstrable harm.

We will **need** to know:

- The address of the property.
- How the problem affects you.
- When the problem started.

We would **like** to know:

- The name of the people or company responsible.
- A diary or log of activity.
- Any other relevant information.
What the Enforcement Service cannot deal with

Planning Enforcement is restricted to matters relating to the Town and Country Planning Act and associated legislation. For this reason it is not possible for our team to deal with matters relating to:

- Neighbour Disputes.
- Land ownership and boundary disputes.
- Restrictive Covenants placed on your property when it was built.

In these cases you are advised to consult a solicitor.

Parking or other activities taking place on the public highway are a matter for Northamptonshire County Council.

What happens after I have reported something to the Council?

Reports will normally be acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt and you will be informed of the case officer dealing with the matter. Those cases of highest priority will be dealt with first.

An initial investigation will normally be carried out within 14 working days.

If a breach has occurred, the person responsible may be asked to put it right or make a planning application.

If this approach fails, the Council can then consider whether it is expedient to take more formal action.

Northampton Borough Council treats breaches of planning regulations very seriously and is committed to bringing unauthorised development under control.

Business uses of dwellings

Business use of a house may not always be a matter for enforcement. The Council will need to assess the harm to neighbours in each case from matters such as traffic, noise and disturbance.

To contact the Planning Enforcement Team you can write to:

Planning Enforcement
The Guildhall
St Giles Square
Northampton
NN1 1DE

Telephone: (01604) 837847 or 837842
Email: planningenforcement@northampton.gov.uk