

## **5. What are our priorities?**

The Authority receives a large number of enquiries each year and although many of these do not result in enforcement action, others do and require lengthy investigations or legal action over months and sometimes years. As resources are limited, it is essential that they are used to their maximum effect. The Authority therefore gives **priority to those cases where greatest harm is caused**. Individual cases may be re-prioritised as the investigation progresses, new evidence comes to light or if there are attempts to put any breach right.

The Authority has a three-tier prioritisation system, as shown below.

### **High Priority**

- Unauthorised building, mining or other operations that are having a serious detrimental impact on the valued characteristics of the National Park (e.g. large unauthorised buildings prominently sited in the open countryside, unauthorised storage of building materials, scrap metal or stone on sites that are highly visible from public vantage points).
- Uses of land and/or buildings that are causing significant harm to amenity or public safety and/or are seriously damaging to the valued characteristics of the area (e.g. noisy industrial or commercial uses close to residential properties).
- Any unauthorised development within the Natural Zone (see policy LC1 of the Local Plan and L1 of the Core Strategy) or in a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), particularly where it affects the natural and remote character of the area or harms the features of the SSSI.
- Potential threats to trees that are subject of a Tree Preservation Order or important trees in Conservation Areas.
- Significant works of demolition, removal of historic features or other unauthorised works to listed buildings that seriously affect their historic and/or architectural character.
- Threat of demolition of unlisted buildings (including boundary walls) within Conservation Areas which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the area.
- Breaches of planning control that cause harm and are nearing immunity.

### **Medium Priority**

- Unauthorised building or other operations that are having a moderate impact on the valued characteristics of the National Park (e.g. stable buildings located on an open field away from other buildings, or extensions to buildings which appear unsightly, but do not cause any significant amenity issues. Vehicle bodies used for storage or housing animals).
- Uses of land and/or buildings that are causing moderate harm to amenity or public safety and/or to the valued characteristics of the area (e.g. some types of open air

storage, untidy land and activities taking place on weekends creating noise and disturbance)

- Unauthorised works to listed buildings that moderately affect their historic and/or architectural character.
- Unauthorised advertisements in the open countryside or within Conservation Areas that detract from the valued characteristics of the area.
- Breaches of residential occupancy conditions (e.g. those attached to agricultural worker's dwellings, holiday accommodation and local needs dwellings).

### **Low Priority**

- Unauthorised advertisements within designated settlements not causing serious harm to the valued characteristics of the area and/or to residential amenity
- Minor developments resulting in limited harm to the valued characteristics of the area and/or to residential amenity (e.g. the erection of wall, gates and fences, sheds or hardstandings)
- Minor breaches of planning conditions resulting in limited harm to the valued characteristics of the area and/or to residential amenity (e.g. non - compliance with minor landscaping schemes)
- Untidy land/buildings causing minimal harm to the valued characteristics of the area and/or to residential amenity
- Unauthorised satellite dishes on buildings

It is important to note that the lists above are examples only and are not exhaustive.

### **Valued Characteristics**

A full list and detailed discussion of what is meant by the term 'valued characteristics of the area' is set out in the Authority's Core Strategy. For planning enforcement purposes however the key 'valued characteristics' to consider include the impact of the breach of planning control on the following:

- natural beauty, natural heritage, landscape character and diversity of landscapes
- sense of wildness and remoteness
- clean earth, air and water
- wildlife
- biodiversity
- distinctive character of hamlets, villages and towns

- trees, woodlands, hedgerows, stone walls, field barns and other landscape features
- historic buildings, and registered parks and gardens
- tranquillity and quiet enjoyment
- outdoor recreation and adventure

As a general rule, the greater the impact on these things, the greater priority we will give to the enforcement case.



### **The Role of Authority Members**

Most members of the Authority, particularly those who sit on the Planning Committee, take a keen interest in enforcement and regard it as central to the work of the Development Management Service. A review of enforcement activity is reported to the Planning Committee each quarter in January, April, July and October. This gives members the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Monitoring & Enforcement Team.