



Compton Parish Council

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Compton Parish Council: Response to West Berkshire Council's Draft Planning Enforcement Plan Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Planning Enforcement Plan (PEP). Compton Parish Council welcomes the intention to improve clarity, transparency and prioritisation within the enforcement service. We recognise the pressures on the enforcement team and the importance of ensuring that resources are directed to cases involving genuine planning harm.

However, the Council has several concerns about the proposed introduction of Category 4 - Low Priority and would welcome further clarification and strengthening of the document before supporting this change.

1. Need for a clearer explanation of “planning harm” and how Category 4 will be applied

The draft plan introduces Category 4 for breaches “unlikely to result in harm” or “trivial in nature”, but it does not define what “harm” means in this context or how officers will assess it. Without this, it is difficult for anyone using the enforcement service to understand why a case would be placed in Category 4 rather than Category 3.

The Parish Council believes the PEP should include:

- A clear explanation of what constitutes planning harm.
- The factors that will be considered when assessing harm.
- How cumulative or longer-term impacts will be taken into account.
- Examples that illustrate the threshold between Category 3 and Category 4.

It would be helpful to clarify that Category 4 should *not* include cases involving, for example:

- heritage assets (listed buildings, conservation areas)
- protected trees or ancient woodland
- breaches close to immunity deadlines
- repeated or ongoing breaches
- cases where harm cannot be ruled out without a site visit

These examples would help the public understand how the category is intended to operate.

2. Need for clearer criteria and safeguards for Category 4

Given the experience of inconsistent enforcement outcomes under the current system, Compton Parish Council is concerned that Category 4 could weaken enforcement unless supported by clear safeguards.

We believe the PEP should include:

- Criteria that must be met before a case is placed in Category 4.
- Confirmation that Category 4 will not be used where a breach is approaching an immunity period.
- Clarity on when a site visit will be required rather than relying solely on a desktop review.
- Reassurance that cases can be escalated promptly if new information indicates greater harm.

For example, a minor breach such as a small satellite dish may be appropriate for Category 4; however, a similar-looking breach on a listed building or in a conservation area would not be.

These distinctions would help ensure that Category 4 is used appropriately and does not inadvertently reduce the robustness of enforcement.

3. Request for a formal review after 12 months

Compton Parish Council believes it is important to understand whether the revised prioritisation system is working as intended.

We therefore suggest that the PEP should include:

- A commitment to a formal review 12 months after implementation.
- Publication of the findings.
- An opportunity for parishes and residents to provide feedback.
- Adjustments to the prioritisation system if the review identifies issues.

This would demonstrate accountability and provide an opportunity to address any problems that emerge once the new system is operating.