If possible, provide dated photographs of work in progress
- be prepared to act as a witness

If you are the subject of an allegation:
- please help us with the information we need to complete our investigation
- please co-operate with the Enforcement Officer involved to enable them to advise you

Prioritisation of Enforcement Allegations
It is important to progress enforcement cases quickly and efficiently. The Council will seek to ensure that all reported breaches of planning control are resolved as quickly as possible. However to enable the most efficient use of Council resources the following priorities are followed when investigating and resolving breaches of planning control.

Category A - High Priority
Alleged breaches felt to require urgent action:
- Any unauthorised development, which causes immediate, irreparable and serious harm to the neighbourhood;
- Any non-compliance with a condition or legal agreement, which is causing immediate harm to the environment and public safety.
- Unauthorised works to a irreplaceable assets such as works to a listed building or a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order;
- Other breaches where any delay may allow the situation to deteriorate significantly or make it more difficult to remedy.

Category B - Medium Priority
The following will be treated as medium priority, providing they are not so severe as to fall into category A:
- Breaches contrary to policies in the development plan
- Breaches that cause a disturbance to neighbours and the character of the area;
- Unauthorised display of adverts where this is likely to set a precedent leading to the display of more unauthorised adverts;
- Unauthorised and inappropriate residential extensions or alterations.
- Breaches of conditions attached to planning permissions that are harmful to amenity or likely to set an undesirable precedent.

Category C - Low Priority
The following will be treated as low priority, provided that the results of the breach are not so serious as to fall into A or B:
- Minor breaches of planning control where there is no significant harm to the Council’s planning policy or objectives;
- Other breaches of conditions attached to planning permissions.
- Unauthorised display of adverts;
- Temporary breaches, which are likely to resolve themselves;
- A matter where an initial assessment indicates it may be ‘permitted development' or recommended for approval if a regularising application were submitted.
- Any other alleged breaches of planning control.
How do you use these services?
The planning enforcement service is provided by a team within the Development Control Group. This team will investigate any written allegations. If you need to report a possible breach, or if you need information or advice, our contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

If you feel that the Borough Council have failed to appropriately investigate something you have reported you should in the first instance take up your allegation with the Group Manager for Development Control and Building Control.

If this does not resolve your concerns, there are two further stages of the Council Complaint Procedure, the details of which are held at reception points or viewed online at www.southend.gov.uk.

Please note that this procedure cannot be utilised where a criminal investigation is currently in hand or a legal notice has been served. Ultimately if you remain dissatisfied you can complain to the Local Authority Ombudsman. Details will be provided on request.

What does the Service offer?
- check that developments are built in accordance with the approved plans and comply with any planning conditions
- investigate written allegations from members of the public about building works and other activities that are being carried out in their area
- check whether any necessary permissions have been obtained from the Council or whether the development is unlawful
- advise people on the steps they should take to avoid enforcement action being taken against them
- where breaches of planning control cannot be resolved through negotiation, we take formal action or prosecute those responsible for unlawful developments
- give information and advice about the planning system
- advise all interested parties of the outcome of our investigations

In any instance where you think you may be in breach of planning control, please contact the Borough Council for advice. This will save time, money and inconvenience for everyone.

What can you expect from the service?
If you ask us to investigate works or activities, the service will:
- treat your allegation in confidence so far as possible
- acknowledge receipt of your allegation and tell you which officer is dealing with it within 3 working days
- let you know the course of action to be taken within 10 working days from the initial site visit
- invite your comments on any resulting application

If an allegation is made about your property or premises, we will:
- not enter your property unless we believe that it is necessary to do so. Our officers will give you proof of their identity
- carry out a full and independent investigation of the matter before deciding on any action
- tell you which officer is dealing with the case and give you an opportunity to discuss the matter
- tell you what the conclusions of our investigations are. We will write to you saying what you have done wrong, what we would like you to do to put matters right, how long we will allow you to do this, and what will happen if you do not put matters right
- write to warn you if we decide to issue an Enforcement Notice or intend to start prosecution action
- ensure that any requirements for compliance will only be that necessary to ensure the problem is resolved.

How can you help?
The Borough Council are asked to investigate a very large number of cases each year. Many planning enforcement matters take a considerable amount of time to bring to a conclusion because of the need to establish whether or not a breach of planning control has taken place. Therefore, if you ask us to investigate works or activities we need you to do the following:
- provide your name, address and daytime telephone number
- provide as much information as possible. Identify the exact location and tell us what has happened and when it took place. Identify who you believe is responsible and take down the names of any builders involved (from various