# Landowner ordered to remove woodland storage buildings after planning dispute



A protracted dispute over the construction of woodland storage buildings in Adisham Woods, near Canterbury in Kent, has culminated in an enforcement order requiring their removal by November 2025. The controversy involves Colin Parsons, a 67-year-old landowner who has invested over £300,000 into developing the land, and Canterbury City Council, which ruled that the buildings breached planning regulations.

The conflict dates back to February 2019 when planning documents indicated that Mr Parsons did not require prior approval to erect what was described as a "proposed agricultural building" under permitted development rules. Nevertheless, after a complaint about the structures was lodged in October 2020, the council initially deemed the buildings acceptable. This stance was reversed in 2022 when Canterbury City Council issued an enforcement notice, arguing the buildings were unlawful and did not meet planning requirements.

After appeals stretched through the system, reaching the High Court, Mr Parsons was ultimately instructed to dismantle the buildings or risk criminal prosecution. The council claims that the structures were not built according to the initially approved plans and that they harm the character and appearance of the area, designated as an Area of High Landscape Value. A report by a government Planning Inspector upheld this view, emphasising that the buildings likely caused "loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitat" and were unnecessary for woodland management.

Mr Parsons, who runs a specialist road works company, vehemently disputes these conclusions. He maintains that he and his family have acted in the interests of environmental conservation, investing significant sums and effort in saving and maintaining the woodlands. “We spent over £300,000 saving the wood. Without people like us investing private money into the woodland, it would have remained neglected, like it was for more than 40 years before we bought our plots,” he said.

He described the structures as essential for storing machinery and carrying out forestry work sustainably, highlighting their role in reducing carbon footprint by allowing equipment to be kept onsite. He also underlined the ecological benefits of his work, which included replanting, fencing to deter anti-social behaviour, and creating safe habitats for local wildlife such as buzzards, badgers, foxes, deer, rabbits, birds, butterflies, bats, and owls. Mr Parsons is frustrated by opposition from some local residents he terms "nimby" campaigners and by what he perceives as poor treatment from the council over the years.

“We have never lived there, there is no toilet, there are no windows, it is simply to keep the machinery and make a cup of tea,” he clarified. “It’s not illegal to build on woodland. Our three buildings that we put permission in for, we met all the criteria when we built them, but we’ve had one campaigner in the village who’s had it in for us and they’ve sided with them.”

The Parsons family also expressed concern that their conservation work is undervalued. “Our work has protected the wildlife… because our security cameras have stopped the fly-tipping, drug-dealing, badger-baiting and the anti-social behaviour,” Mr Parsons said.

He conveyed frustration over the council’s inflexibility and lack of communication, despite his attempts to negotiate a compromise allowing retention of some buildings for ongoing woodland management. “We want to compromise and take down one building, but we need to keep the other two for our work - but the council will not speak to us,” he stated.

A spokesperson for Canterbury City Council reaffirmed their position, stating that the buildings were not constructed in accordance with approved plans and that the enforcement notice was upheld following an inspector’s thorough review. The council highlighted their commitment to protecting ancient woodland and local residents’ interests, adding there is no evidence the owners have been living in the buildings and confirming that the landowners remain free to manage the woodland within planning regulations.

The council’s enforcement action represents a significant financial and operational setback for Mr Parsons and his family, who have dedicated years to managing Adisham Woods. The deadline for removal of the buildings is set for November 2025, with non-compliance carrying the risk of criminal charges. The situation reflects an ongoing and complex interaction between private land management, environmental stewardship, local governance, and planning law.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/woodland-owners-mount-high-court-fight-to-keep-illegal-str-320068/> - This article discusses the High Court ruling against three Kent woodland owners who lost their legal challenge to keep illegal buildings and hard standing at Adisham near Canterbury, aligning with the article's mention of a High Court decision requiring the removal of the structures.
2. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/unauthorised-buildings-in-ancient-kent-woodland-must-be-torn-314752/> - This piece reports on the Planning Inspectorate's decision mandating the removal of five buildings in Adisham's ancient woodland, supporting the article's claim of an enforcement order requiring removal by November 2025.
3. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/owners-fight-councils-order-to-tear-woodland-buildings-down-284007/> - This article details the appeals by owners of 'illegal' buildings in Adisham woodland against Canterbury City Council's order to remove them, corroborating the article's mention of appeals reaching the High Court.
4. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/i-ve-planted-100k-trees-now-council-wants-to-demolish-my-278872/> - This piece features an interview with a woodland owner in Adisham who has planted 100,000 trees and criticizes Canterbury City Council's enforcement notice, aligning with the article's mention of landowners disputing the council's conclusions.
5. <https://adishamwoods.co.uk/> - The official website of Watch Over Adisham's Woods (WOAW), a campaign group opposing developments in Adisham's ancient woodlands, supporting the article's mention of local residents and environmental organizations opposing the developments.
6. <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/canterbury/news/illegal-buildings-in-ancient-woods-must-be-torn-down-278462/> - This article reports on the enforcement notices served by Canterbury City Council requiring the removal of six buildings in Adisham's ancient woodlands, corroborating the article's mention of enforcement action against the structures.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14659601/Landowner-NIMBYs-loses-planning-battle.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data