



Public Speaking at meetings of the Planning Committee

April 2012

When and where do Planning Committee meetings take place?

The Planning Committee meets in the Council Chamber at South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA at 10.00am on a Wednesday, which is usually the first Wednesday each month. Further details, including contacts, directions, and variations to dates are available on the Council's website or by phoning Democratic Services on 03450 450 500.

Can those not on the Planning Committee attend these meetings?

Yes – typically, meetings may be attended by applicants, their agents, objectors, neighbours, other villagers, local district councillors and members of parish councils. The vast majority of agenda items will be considered in public. However, the law does allow Councils to consider a limited range of issues in private session without members of the Press and public being present. An example would be a planning issue in which sensitive personal or commercial matters are discussed, or options, which, if publicized, could prejudice the Council's position. In every case, the public interest in excluding the Press and Public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed to them.

Can those not on the Planning Committee speak at Planning Committee meetings?

Yes. There are four categories of “non-Committee speakers” (public speakers). These are, in order:

- (1) Objector
- (2) Supporter (usually the applicant or planning agent)
- (3) Parish Council representative
- (4) Ordinarily, one local Councillor (whether a Committee member or not) will also speak. However, where there are two or three local Councillors, a second local Councillor will be invited to speak only if they have a view contrary to that of the first.

Parish Councils and local Members speak as part of the planning process, regardless of whether they support or oppose an application. Objectors and Supporters speak as part of the specific application and, except in exceptional circumstances identified by the Committee Chairman prior to the meeting, number one in favour and one against. Where more than one objector or supporter exists, they are encouraged to agree between themselves on a presentation that covers all their concerns.

In exceptional circumstances, the Committee Chairman may opt to make special arrangements such as where a neighbouring parish is perceived as being affected by a proposal, or for a Portfolio Holder.

What can people say and for how long can they speak?

Each speech is limited to three minutes. Speakers must restrict themselves to material planning considerations such as:

- Design, appearance, layout, scale and landscaping
- Environmental health issues such as noise, smells and general disturbance
- Highway safety and traffic issues
- Impact on trees, listed buildings, conservation areas and other designated sites.
- Loss of an important view from **public** land that compromises the local character
- Planning law and previous decisions
- Planning Policy Guidance
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework
- Visual and residential amenity

Committee members will **not** be able to take into account issues such as:

- boundary and area disputes
- perceived morals or motives of a developer
- the effect on the value of property
- loss of a **private** view over adjoining land (unless there is a parallel loss of an important view from public land)
- matters not covered by planning, highway or environmental health law
- covenants and private rights of access
- suspected future development,
- processing of the application.

Speakers should be careful not to say anything derogatory or inflammatory, which could expose them to the risk of legal action. After the objector and supporter have spoken, Committee members may ask speakers to clarify matters relating to their presentation. If those registered to speak are not present in the meeting room by the time the relevant item is considered, the Committee won't be able to wait, and will determine the application – officers will be able to say whether a particular item is at the beginning, middle or end of the agenda, but cannot give an accurate idea of when it will be considered.

Can public speakers give Committee members written information or photographs relating to an application or objection?

Yes, but **not** at the meeting itself. Councillors will be given lots of information to read and digest before the meeting, so need to be given as much time as possible to read or view the information.

Please send such information, preferably by e-mail, to Democratic Services, who will circulate the information for you. In practical terms, such information will not be distributed earlier than seven days or later than two days before the meeting. Please do not supply information directly to members of the Planning Committee.

Projection equipment operated by Council officers is available in the Council Chamber.

How are applications considered?

The appropriate planning officer will introduce the item. Committee members will then hear any speakers' presentations. The order of speaking will be as stated above. The Committee will then debate the application and vote on either the recommendations of officers in the agenda or a proposal made and seconded by members of the Committee. Should the Committee propose to follow a course of action different to officer recommendation, Councillors must give sound planning reasons for doing so.

The Council is committed to improving, for all members of the community, access to its agendas and minutes. We try to take all circumstances into account but, if you have any specific needs, please let us know, and we will do what we can to help you.

Further information is available from Democratic Services, South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA – Telephone 03450 450 500.

democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk
