

# South Cambridgeshire District Council

## ***Public Speaking at Planning Committee meetings***

If you need this document in a large print, or any other, format, please let us know, and we will try to help!

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to extending public involvement in the planning process. There are already extensive consultation and neighbour notification procedures for all planning applications. Now you can speak directly to councillors at Planning Committee Meetings.

This guidance note explains the Council's public participation policy for supporters, objectors, parish councils and local Members (not otherwise members of the Committee) at meetings. It tries to answer some of the questions you may have about the procedures and what to expect at the meeting. It is based on simple rules which the Council has formulated to make the system as fair and easy to operate as possible, so please read all the guidance.

### **How can I find out how the Planning Committee works?**

Please contact the Democratic Services Officer on issues relating to Committee timing and process. Planning Committee meetings are currently held on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and, in general, May, when they are held on the second Wednesday) at South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne. The Planning Committee Agenda is published five clear **working** days before the meeting (generally 8 calendar days). The Planning Committee does not consider every application received by the Council.. The majority of planning applications are determined by senior officers (some in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee and with local Members) under the Council's delegation scheme. You will need to check with the Case officer to see how the application in which you are interested is to be considered and on what date.

### **Do I need to attend the meeting to make my comments known to the Committee?**

No. Written comments will be considered by the committee as well. As the meetings are open to the public, you may simply want to attend as an observer.

## **How do I arrange to speak at the meeting?**

In order to be eligible to speak as an objector or supporter (other than the applicant, agent or local Member), you must have made a written representation on the application in question. Your right to address the Committee, if the application falls to be considered by it, will be set out in the standard consultation letter sent by the Planning Service after the application is received; this will include contact details showing how you can obtain copies of this guidance.

If you wish to speak at the meeting, please register your interest no later than 12.00pm on the Monday before the meeting. You can register your interest by contacting the Democratic Services officer on 01954 713028, e-mail [ian.senior@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:ian.senior@scambs.gov.uk). The agenda is available online at [www.scambs.gov.uk/meetings](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/meetings) a week before the meeting. Registration will be on a first come first served basis. This means that, for each application, the name and telephone number of the first person to call as an objector or as a supporter will be noted and any subsequent callers will be given those details (as appropriate) to enable them to organise how their case will be presented, and by whom.

## **What is the order of speaking on each application?**

A planning officer will introduce the item. Members of the public will then be called to speak in the following order:-

- objector (3 minutes) followed by questions to the objector from the Chairman and Committee members
- applicant **or** agent **or** supporter (3 minutes) followed by questions to the applicant / agent / supporter from the Chairman and Committee members
- Parish Council Chairman or representative (3 minutes) followed by questions to the Parish Council Chairman or representative from the Chairman and Committee members
- Local Member (not otherwise on the Committee) (3 minutes) followed by to the local Member from the Chairman and Committee members.

PLEASE NOTE –Councillors can only ask questions seeking clarification of points raised during your 3-minute slot.

The Planning Committee Chairman will direct you to a designated seat before you speak. The three minute rule will be strictly applied by the Chairman, who will ask you to go back to your seat in the public gallery after that time and any Question and Answer session. In exceptional circumstances, for example where a particularly large and/or contentious application is being considered, the 3-minute limit may be extended at the Chairman's discretion. The planning officer may add extra comments and then the Committee will debate the issues before

making a decision. No further contribution from those listed above will be allowed.

### **Can I ask questions of other speakers?**

No – in general, you should seek answers to your questions before the meeting and state your case on the basis of information given to you. You must not interrupt other speakers or the Committee debate.

### **Can I make a PowerPoint presentation, use slides or overhead transparencies or circulate supporting documents?**

Unfortunately we are logistically unable to offer PowerPoint presentations, slides and Overhead transparencies. If you wish to circulate supporting documents, please do so no later than 48 hours before the meeting so that Councillors have adequate opportunity to consider the material. A list of Councillors' names and addresses (including e-mail) is available online at [www.scams.gov.uk/councillors](http://www.scams.gov.uk/councillors). Please do not send documents to the Council for this purpose, and please ensure that every member of the Committee receives the same information, a copy of which should be sent to the Case officer and to your local Member or Members (see [www.scams.gov.uk/councillors](http://www.scams.gov.uk/councillors) for details, or 'phone the Contact Centre on 08450 450500.

### **What can I say at the meeting?**

You should confine what you say to a statement of fact or opinion, and:

- Be brief and to the point
- limit your views to the planning application
- confine yourself to relevant planning issues.

### **What are the relevant planning issues in considering applications?**

These will vary from application to application, but will include:

- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- Design, appearance, layout , scale and landscaping
- Environmental health issues such as noise, smells and general disturbance
- Government Planning Policy Guidance
- 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
- Visual and residential amenity

- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 and the Local Development Framework 2007.

### **What matters are likely to be irrelevant in considering applications?**

These will vary from application to application, but will include:

- Boundary and area disputes
- Developers' morals or motives
- Effect on the value of property
- Loss of a private view over adjoining land (unless there a parallel loss of an important view from public land – see above).
- Matters not covered by planning, highway or environmental health law
- Personal issues, such as access, dropped kerbs and rights of way
- Suspected future development

In your own interests, you should not say anything derogatory or inflammatory, which could expose you to the risk of legal action against you.

### **How do parish councils get involved?**

Parish councils are consulted about every planning application in their parish (and sometimes about applications in neighbouring parishes). Copies of planning applications can be viewed locally, at South Cambs Hall or using the following link on the Council's website:  
<http://egov.scambs.gov.uk/planningapps/pa.php> For the contact details of your local parish council clerk, please phone the Contact Centre on 08450 450 500, or go online to <http://scambs.moderngov.co.uk> and follow the link to Parish Councils.

### **The role of District Councillors**

Councillors are elected to represent you (and South Cambridgeshire as a whole). You may want to contact your local Councillor to discuss a particular planning application. However, Councillors, especially those who are Members of the Planning Committee, will not commit themselves to a decision before hearing the evidence and debate at the relevant planning meeting. They will need to take into account planning law and local and national planning policies as well as public opinion.