



Public Speaking at meetings of the Planning Committee

Draft 1.3

What is the Planning Committee?

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee is a Regulatory Committee consisting of elected Councillors. It is responsible for the following:

- determination of larger, more complex or sensitive planning applications, including those that, formerly would have gone to the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee, submitted to the Council by other organisations or by members of the public
- any planning application submitted to the Council by one of its officers or elected Councillors;
- Tree Preservation Orders and the protection of important hedgerows;
- Responding on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council, as Order Making Authority, to Cambridgeshire County Council about Public Rights of Way within the District;
- Monitoring the progress and outcome of Appeals and Enforcement Action;
- Authorizing Direct Enforcement Action
- Procedural matters relating to the planning process.

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 10.30am on a Wednesday, which is usually the first Wednesday each month. Further details, including contacts, directions, and variations to dates / venue are available on the Council's website by visiting www.scambs.gov.uk and follow the links from 'The Council', or by phoning Democratic Services on 03450 450 500.

Can anyone attend Planning Committee meetings?

Meetings of the Planning Committee are open to the public, so anyone can attend. A range of people with differing interests in specific applications observe these meetings, whether they are applicants or an applicant's agent, objectors, neighbours or other residents, local District Councillors or members of Parish Councils. Despite being a public meeting, in some very occasional cases the law does allow the committee to consider some matters in private. For example, an application may contain information of a personal or commercially sensitive nature that the Council would not be able to publicise. In every case, however, the public interest in excluding the press and public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed.

Can anyone speak at Planning Committee meetings?

The Planning Committee welcomes public speaking and participation from outside of the Committee's membership. All registrations to speak must be made direct to Democratic Services. Other than Members of the Planning Committee and the Council's officers, there are four main categories of other people able to speak at meetings of the Committee: -

- (1) 1 x Community Objector or objector's agent
- (2) (a) 1 x Applicant (or applicant's agent)
(b) 1 x Community Supporter **if** (and only if) the officer recommendation is Refusal or the applicant or agent forego their right to speak
- (3) 1 x Parish Council representative (elected or co-opted Councillor, agent or Parish Clerk)
- (4) Local District Councillor(s) or another Councillor appointed by them

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. Where more than

one objector or supporter exists, they must agree between themselves on a presentation that covers all their concerns. Where the officer recommendation is Approval, a Community Supporter will only be allowed to address the Committee if the applicant or applicant's agent forego their right to speak.

In exceptional circumstances, the Committee Chairman may opt to make special arrangements such as where a neighbouring parish is perceived as being significantly affected by a proposal, or for a Portfolio Holder (member of the Council's Cabinet) to speak.

It is impossible to say at what time each application on the agenda will be discussed. Public speakers should therefore be prepared to address the Committee at any time after the beginning of the meeting.

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

Each speech is limited to three minutes. This applies even when the applicant (or applicant's agent) and a Community supporter both address the Committee, as detailed above – the objector can still only speak for three minutes. The Chairman operates a system of lights that indicate when one minute remains and when the allotted time of three minutes has been used up. Speakers address the Committee from a clearly marked table, and must speak into the microphone provided. They should 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, biodiversity, conservation areas and other designated sites.
- Loss of an important view from **public** land that compromises the local character
- Planning law and previous decisions including appeals
- National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance
- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework and the emerging Local Plan
- 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,
- the retrospective nature of a planning 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.

Committee members will have read the written reports prepared for them, so speakers should try to avoid repeating points that are already explained in that material.

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

Yes. The absolute deadline for submitting such material to the Democratic Services Officer is 1.00pm on the Friday before the meeting (such deadline being brought forward by 24 hours for each Bank Holiday between the day of agenda publication and day of the meeting).

Please send such information, preferably by e-mail, to Democratic Services (ian.senior@scambs.gov.uk), who will circulate the information for you among all interested parties (applicant, objectors, Parish Council, officers). In the interests of natural justice, such information will not be distributed earlier than five working days (not including Saturdays, Sundays or Public holidays) before the meeting **Please do not supply information directly to members of the Planning Committee because of the need to identify substitute members, key Council officers and other interested parties.**

Projection equipment, operated by Council officers, is available in the Council Chamber for the display of a limited number of photographs only.

How are applications considered?

The appropriate planning officer will introduce the item. Committee members will then hear any speakers' presentations, and might ask those speakers questions of clarification. 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

Updated:
