

Public Speaking on Planning Applications

You have the right to speak at the Council's
Planning Committees

This leaflet tells you how the scheme operates.

The District Council is committed to extending public involvement in the planning process. As part of the commitment of the Council to extending public involvement in the planning process, there is now a scheme of public speaking for applications that are being determined at a meeting of the Planning Committee. There are already extensive consultation and neighbour notification procedures for applications (see other relevant leaflets), but the ability to speak at the committee meeting enables an even wider opportunity for the applicant/supporters, objectors, and the Parish Council, to put forward their views directly to the Members of the Committee, before the decision is made.

This leaflet explains the Council's public participation policy for supporters, objectors and local councils 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 the entire leaflet.

How does the Planning Committee work?

The majority of applications are determined by officers under delegated powers. Only a small proportion are debated by the Planning Committee, and these will usually be applications which are more controversial, or where there are significant implications that might result from the proposed development.

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

No - the committee will consider written comments anyway. As the meetings are open to the public you may, if you wish, attend the meeting just to see what happens, or register to speak on an application (see below).

How can I find out when an application will be considered?

The Planning Committee usually meets on the first Wednesday of each month starting at 2pm at The Grange, Ely, although this does not prevent an extraordinary meeting taking place if required. The agenda is published at least five working days before the meeting (Tuesday before the meeting), and copies will be available from the main reception at the Grange and at public libraries; the agenda will also be available on the Council's website, at least five working days before the date of the meeting. It is up to you to check whether the application is on the agenda and to register if you wish to speak (see below) at Planning Committee about an application, and you can do this by phoning Democratic Services on 01353 665555.

How do I arrange to speak at the meeting?

If you wish to speak either for, or against a development proposal, you will need to phone Democratic Services on 01353 665555 no later than 5pm on the Tuesday before the meeting. **Please note that this is the only way to register to speak.** If you have any special needs, or language difficulties or require any adaptations to facilitate this, please let the Democratic Services Officer know when you telephone.

Registration will be on a "first come first served" basis. This will mean that, for each application, the name of the first person to call as an objector or as a supporter will be noted and any subsequent callers will be given their details to organise between themselves how their five minute slot will be used.

What is the order of speaking on each application?

For each item on the agenda, the Planning Case Officer will provide an introduction, and present the planning report to the Committee. The meeting will then move out of formal session and members of the public can speak in the following order:

- objectors (5 minutes)
- applicant/agent or supporters (5 minutes)
- local Parish/Town Council (5 minutes)

You will be asked to sit at the designated seat set out for public speaking. The Chairman will apply the five minute limit strictly (although if you have any special needs or language issues, the Chairman may exercise discretion to allow you extra time to speak). At the end of the time, the Chairman may ask Members if they have any questions to put directly to you, in relation to any points that you have made, or to clarify any issue. If there are no questions, you will then be requested to return to your seat in the public gallery.

The meeting will then resume in formal session. The planning officer may add extra comments and then there will be an opportunity for debate by the Committee. The decision is then made.

Please note: that District Councillors with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the matter under consideration should not attend the meeting (unless they have a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer beforehand). District Councillors with a personal or prejudicial interest in an item being discussed may speak at the Planning meeting. If the Councillor has a personal interest they will need to declare this before they speak on the issue. If a Councillor has a personal and prejudicial interest, they must declare this before the item is discussed, and can then make representations, answer questions or give evidence – *for the same length of time as a member of the public (i.e. 5 minutes)*. Once this has finished the Councillor must leave the room. The Chairman of the Planning Committee will decide when the Member exercises this right; however, it will be before any debate on the item.

Can I ask questions of other speakers?

No. Once you have stated your case, you are not able to question or interrupt other speakers, or the Committee debate. You can of course seek answers to your questions prior to the meeting, and then state your case on the basis of information given to you.

Can I use slides or overhead transparencies or circulate supporting documents?

No. You are not able to use slides, projectors, or other technology when you speak. If you wish to circulate supporting documents, this should be done before the date of the committee meeting. You can request a list of the Councillors names and addresses from Customer Services on 01353 665555.

What can I say at the meeting?

You are advised that to make a statement of greatest impact, you should:

- Be brief and to the point.
- Limit your views to the planning application.
- Confine yourself to relevant planning issues.

Relevant planning issues will vary depending on the nature of the site and the proposed development, but may include the following:

- Local Plan, policies
- Government Planning Policies (PPS's)
- planning law and previous decisions
- highway safety and traffic
- noise, disturbance and smells
- residential amenity
- design, character, appearance and layout
- impact on trees, Listed Buildings, and Conservation Areas

The following would not be considered as relevant;

- matters covered by other legislation
- boundary or area disputes
- the morals or motives of the developer
- suspected future development
- loss of views over other people's land
- effect on the value of property
- personal matters

You should particularly note that you should not make derogatory or defamatory remarks about other people. Any such comments leave you open to legal action.

When and where are the Committee meetings held?

Planning Committee meetings are usually held on the first Wednesday of every month. They are held in the Council Chamber at The Grange in Ely and the meetings start at 2pm.

How are Parish/town councils involved?

Parish/town councils are consulted on all planning applications and copies of planning applications are usually available to view with the local councils as well as at the District Council offices. For details of your local Parish Council Clerk please contact Customer Services on 01353 665555

The Role of District Councillors:

Councillors are elected to represent you on the District Council. You may like to contact your councillor to discuss the planning application. However he or she will not be able to commit him or herself to a decision before hearing all the evidence and debate at the relevant planning meeting. They will need to take into account planning law and planning guidance as well as public opinion.

Councillors also have the right to attend a meeting, where they have a personal and prejudicial interest, and make representations, answer questions or give evidence – as detailed above.

Who do I ask if I have any other queries?

If you have any questions not answered by this leaflet, you are welcome to contact:

*Democratic Services
East Cambridgeshire District Council
The Grange,
Nutholt Lane,
Ely,
Cambs,
CB7 4EE
Tel: 01353 665555*