

PLANNING ADVICE NOTE 1

PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

When will I be allowed to speak at Planning Committee? -- From January 1st 2010.

Where and when does Planning Committee meet? -- Planning Committee usually meets on the first Thursday of the month in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale. The meetings normally start at 2.00pm. You are advised to check the arrangements well in advance including whether the application has already been decided under powers delegated to planning officers.

Who can attend? -- The Planning Committee is a public meeting. Anyone can attend, including the press. Disabled access is available. However, some items on the agenda such as the enforcement report are exempt and you may be asked to leave the meeting for these items to be discussed.

Who may speak? -- The Chairman will allow one party to speak to put each side of the case. The order of speakers will be...

- The Chairman will introduce the item. The planning officer will present the case and address any late correspondence.
- One objector (if there is more than one objector, they must nominate a spokesperson. If agreement cannot be reached amongst objectors, only the first person to register their interest will be allowed to speak.)
- One supporter of the scheme.
- One representative of the Town or Community Council.
- Where they are not already on Planning Committee, the Ward Member(s) in whose ward the application falls.
- The applicant or his /her agent.

How do I register to speak? -- Planning Committee usually meets on the first Thursday of the month. In order to speak at Committee, you must book a speaking slot by giving your name and contact details in writing/email to the Planning Control Section by 12.00 pm midday on the Tuesday of the week of Committee. (Contact details at the end of this document). You must also state whether you are supporting or objecting to the application. Ward Members need not register.

Your details will be made public as other speakers may wish to approach you to ensure you cover areas of mutual concern. Failure to register your wish to speak by the deadline will result in your right to speak being lost.

Your request to speak must be submitted separately to any other written representations you may send to the Council regarding the application. Please note that if you request to speak at Committee, this will be disregarded if the application is to be decided under delegated powers.

How long will I have to speak? -- Each speaker will be allotted a maximum of 3 minutes. This time limit will be strictly enforced. You will not be allowed to distribute plans/maps, photos or other papers. In exceptional cases, more than one person may be allowed to speak either for or against a proposal. This will be at the discretion of the Chair and will be limited to major planning applications or schemes that have generated significant public interest.

What can I say? -- You should limit your talk to relevant planning issues such as the Development Plan, government policy/guidance, visual appearance/impact or highways considerations. Issues such as devaluation of property, land disputes and competition between businesses are not relevant and will be disregarded by the Planning Committee.

- Planning Committee must make its decision in accordance with strict rules. It cannot approve an application simply because a lot of people are in support – or alternatively refuse planning permission because a lot of people object. Each and every decision must be made based on sound and defensible planning reasons.
- Speakers are advised that they are personally accountable for what they say. They must avoid personal comments. Any comments of a racist or offensive may be referred to the Police. The minutes of the meeting will record your name, address and content of your statement. The Committee forum does not absolve the individual's responsibilities under laws of defamation.
- You do not need to repeat any points that you may have raised in any written objections. They will be included in the officer's report.
- At the discretion of the Chair, you may be asked to answer questions raised by members of the Planning Committee.
- Applicants are advised that it is their responsibility to check when an application is to appear before Planning Committee. The Council will not notify applicants or their agents that a person has registered their right to speak for or against their application at Planning Committee.

At Committee

- The Chair conducts the meeting and retains the right to manage proceedings to ensure that all parties have a fair hearing (subject to the Constitution).
- The Chair will intervene if you exceed your time limit and may adjourn the meeting. You should avoid repeating points that have already been adequately addressed or make inappropriate remarks or are abusing your right to speak before Committee.
- Having confirmed the arrangements of the Committee beforehand, you should attend at least 20 minutes before the meeting begins and introduce yourself to an officer of the Council who will be present to greet speakers.
- An item will not be deferred if any person who has registered to speak fails to attend the meeting.
- The Council operates a policy of conducting and recording meetings in the medium of English. If however you wish to address Planning Committee in Welsh, please notify the Council when you register your wish to speak so that translating arrangements can be made.

What happens if the application is deferred?

This policy only applies to the first hearing of the application at Planning Committee. If a site visit of the Planning Committee is arranged, further speakers will not normally be allowed unless the Chair, under advice from the Chief Legal Officer, considers it is necessary in order to come to an informed decision.

Contact Details

To register your wish to speak at Planning Committee, you must write/email to....

Head of Planning & Building Control
Council Offices
High Street,
Blaina NP13 3XD
(01495 - 355555)

email - planning@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
