

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT THE PLANNING COMMITTEE



This leaflet seeks to answer some of the most commonly asked questions about the public speaking procedures and what to expect at the meeting itself.

Planning Committee meetings are held every four weeks in the Council Chamber, (on the second floor) of the Council Offices at Knowle Green, Staines. A 'Call Over' meeting is held at 6.45pm, immediately prior to the start of the Planning Committee, where officers will give the Committee a technical update on any changes since the publishing of the Committee agenda. In order not to miss any of the proceedings of the Committee meeting it is important that you arrive at the start of the 'Call Over' meeting.

Q 1) Will I be able to address the Committee on any application?

Public speaking is possible on all planning applications. It does not, however, apply to items which are solely seeking authority to pursue enforcement action, approve tree preservation orders or certificates of lawfulness.

Q 2) Who can make representations to the Committee?

There are two categories of speakers:-

- A person speaking against the planning proposal (either individually or on behalf of others).
- A person speaking in support of the planning proposal (usually either the applicant or an agent/architect on their behalf)

Q 3) Do I need to contact the Council before turning up to speak?

If you wish to speak to the Committee you should telephone the Council's Committee Section on 01784-446240 between 9am and 4pm on the day of the meeting or the day before. We will need to know:

- The application on which you wish to speak.
- Your full name, address and telephone number.
- Whether you are in favour or against the application and whether you also represent anyone else.

We will also ask whether we can pass your name and telephone number on to any other caller with a similar point of view in order for views to be co-ordinated. Please note – you cannot register (or assume you have registered) by speaking to any person other than the Council's Committee Section. Even speaking to the planning officer will not suffice.

Q 4) What if somebody has already registered to speak?

Our procedures allow for ONE person to speak in support of the application and ONE against. Requests to speak are dealt with on a "first come first served" basis. Therefore if someone has already asked to speak, for example against the application and you wish to do likewise, you will not be able to do so.

However, provided the person who first registered to speak gives their consent, we may be able to put you in touch with them in order that your arguments/comments can be combined.

Q 5) How long will I get to put my case?

Each speaker will be allocated a maximum of three minutes. In the interests of the efficient running of the meeting this time will be strictly followed. You will not be allowed to ask questions of councillors, officers or other speakers; neither will you be asked questions.

Q 6) Can I circulate photographs or other material at the meeting?

Material cannot be circulated at the meeting. However, it can be sent direct to individual councillors before the meeting and should also be copied to the planning section.

Q 7) What issues should I cover in my three minutes?

The Committee can only determine applications on planning grounds, therefore your case should only relate to planning issues including:

- Policies in the Development Plan and Government Guidance.
- Design, appearance, layout.

- Highway safety and traffic.
- Loss of light/amenity and overlooking.
- Noise, disturbance, smell.
- Conservation of buildings, trees, etc.

The Committee is not permitted to take into account matters such as:

- Private property rights/boundary disputes.
- Feelings towards neighbours.
- Loss of view or loss of property values.
- The developer's morals or motives.

A more comprehensive list of issues is attached as a separate note.

Q 8) What will happen at the "Call Over" (technical update) meeting

A "Call Over" meeting will be held at 6.45 pm, immediately prior to the Planning Committee meeting, which will deal with the following administrative matters for the Committee: ward councillor speaking, public speakers, declarations of interests, late information, withdrawals, changes of condition or any other procedural issues which, in the opinion of the Chairman, ought to be dealt with in advance of the meeting.

Q 9) What will happen at the Planning Committee meeting?

You should make yourself known to the Committee Manager, 15 minutes before the start of the "Call Over" meeting (i.e. 6.30 pm) so that your attendance can be noted and any points of concern can be explained. The Planning Committee meeting will start immediately upon the conclusion of the 'Call Over' meeting. When the application on which you wish to speak has been called by the Chairman, the following protocol will be followed:

- On items where there is public speaking, the Planning Officer will be asked to present the plans to the Committee.
- The Chairman will call upon one person representing all objectors to come forward to speak for a maximum of three minutes. The person will then return to the public gallery.
- The Chairman will call upon one person representing all supporters to come forward to speak for a maximum of three minutes. The person will then return to the public gallery.
- Any non-Planning Committee ward councillor will make representations to the Committee for a maximum of three minutes on cases affecting his/her Ward.
- The Planning Officer will then comment on any factual matters raised by the speakers.
- The Committee will then debate the application/ask questions of officers and reach a decision.
- The Chairman has discretion to allow members of the Committee to raise points of clarification with the developer to resolve factual issues. Where the Chairman allows this, he may ask the objectors to comment on the further information, in the interests of equality.
- The Committee will make a decision, usually by a formal vote and the Chairman will announce the decision which has been made so that it may be formally minuted.

Q 10) What happens if I fail to register to speak or do not turn up at the Committee?

If you do not attend the meeting having given notice of your wish to speak, or if you do not arrive at the meeting in time or if you have not registered with the Council's Committee section to speak, the application will be decided without your involvement. If the item is deferred without any discussion, then no public speaking will take place. However you will be re-notified when the matter goes to a subsequent meeting and be given the opportunity to speak.

In the event of any dispute over these procedures or protocol the Chairman's decision is final.

For further assistance please contact the Council on 01784 446240 or your ward councillor (details available from the Council or via our website www.spelthorne.gov.uk)