

PART 10

Public Speaking at Planning Applications Committee

Introduction

The Council operates a scheme whereby interested parties have the opportunity to speak at meetings of the Planning Applications Committee. The Council considers this adds value to the planning process, offering increased involvement for the public and more informed decision-making by the Committee.

These guidance notes set out how the scheme operates and what to expect at the meeting itself. They are designed to make the system as fair and easy to operate as possible.

Scope of the Scheme

The scheme only applies to applications included on the agenda for a particular meeting. For this purpose, applications include Planning Applications, Listed Building and Conservation Area Consent Applications Advertisement Applications and Tree Applications. The scheme does not apply to Enforcement matters, applications for Certificates of Lawful Use or applications where the Council is not the determining authority.

Who may speak?

Anyone with an interest in an application is able to speak and to make the system manageable, the following numbers have been agreed:

Speaker	Number
Town/Parish Council	1 representative
Ward Member/s (that are not a member of the Committee and represent that ward)	No limit
Objectors (This includes local residents and any professional representative. Amenity Societies/Residents Associations are included but do not have an automatic right to speak.)	Up to 3 representatives
Applicant/Agent/Supporters (Local residents, Amenity Societies etc. may also be supporters. The applicant (or nominee) will have priority in deciding who should speak.)	Up to 3 representatives

Applicants/Agents and those who have commented on an application will be notified of the date when it is to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee so that they can register their interest in speaking (see section below on Registering an interest to speak).

Speakers are selected on a “first come, first served” basis until the above numbers have been reached. Subsequent objectors/supporters are put in touch with those who have already registered to speak so that they can agree what they want to say, either for or against an application, and who will speak.

*If a Member of the Committee is also a Local Ward Member, wishes to speak against, or in support, of an application in that capacity and has registered to speak, then they are allowed to withdraw from the meetings proceedings for that item only and speak for 5 minutes on that particular item. In this event, they would not take part in the debate nor have a vote on the determination of the application on which they spoke. Having spoken, they would be required to leave the room. They then may return to the Committee to determine the remaining items.

Time limits for speakers

The maximum time for each speaker is three minutes, other than the Ward Member/s and Town/Parish Councillors who have five minutes, and this is strictly controlled with start/stop lights.

Procedure at meetings

Those who have registered their interest to speak should arrive at the venue at least 20 minutes before the start to be briefed on the procedure. The sequence of speakers is as follows:

1. Presentation of application by Planning Officer
2. Town/ Parish Council representative*
3. Objectors (up to 3)*
4. Applicant /Agent/ Supporters (up to 3 with applicant having priority)*
5. Further clarification by planning officer (if required)*
6. Ward members (including committee members if following the above* procedure)
7. Committee debate and decision.

**If the ‘opportunity for speak’ is taken up.*

Committee members are not able to question speakers directly but are permitted to ask “closed” questions to seek clarification or provide more information through the Chair only.

Speakers are asked to make verbal presentations only (unless special disability circumstances apply). If a written copy of a presentation is submitted this is included on a supplementary report, provided it is received by Planning Services not later than the day before the meeting.

If an application is deferred, speakers are allowed an opportunity to speak at a subsequent meeting when the application in which they have an interest is considered again.

Venue and time of meetings

All meetings start at 5pm. Meetings of the Planning Applications Committee are held on a three-weekly cycle on a Wednesday in Lewes. However, it may sometimes be necessary to change the venue to another part of the District and prior notice will be given.

Registering an interest to speak

If you wish to speak you must register your intention not later than 12 noon on the day before the Committee meeting.

This can be done in several ways. You can write to us at Planning Services, Southover House, Southover Road. Lewes. BN7 1AB

Alternatively, you can send us a fax on 01273 484452 or telephone 01273 471600. You can also send an e-mail to: planning@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk Please always quote the application number where known.

Relevant issues

When considering applications the Committee members can only take account of relevant "Planning" issues. These can include:

- Structure & Local Plan Policies
- Government Guidance including Orders and Circulars
- Case Law and previous decisions
- Highway safety, traffic, parking
- Noise, disturbance, smells
- Design, appearance, layout, materials, character
- Overshadowing, loss of privacy, residential amenities
- Effect on Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Trees.

There are also certain issues which the Committee members cannot take into account in making planning decisions. Please do not waste your speaking time on these matters.

These include:

- Matters covered by other laws e.g. licensing
- Private property rights
- Effect on value of property
- Loss of view from a private property
- Possible future development
- Preferable alternative development
- Personal circumstances (except in exceptional cases)
- Applicant's morals or motives
- Moral/religious issues.

Please note there is no legal protection for comments made at meetings and it is therefore important that derogatory or defamatory statements are avoided.

Further information

If you have any queries about the scheme please contact the Planning Administration team (01273 471600).