

Speaking at the Planning Services Committee A Guide for the Public

Introduction

This leaflet explains the procedures to be followed if you are interested in speaking at a meeting of the Planning Services Committee. The arrangements explained here apply to applicants or their agent and to objectors or supporters of a proposed scheme. Separate arrangements are in place for Parish/Town Council representatives to address the Committee.

The right to address the Committee is in addition to representations received in writing, which will continue to be summarised by officers and reported to Members. The opportunity to speak to the Committee is to enable you to reinforce the comments you have previously made in a written representation.

Deciding whether to speak

Members of the public in whatever capacity are welcome to attend meetings of the Planning Committee to listen to the determination of planning applications. While there is the right to speak, there is no obligation to do so, and indeed, it is important to bear in mind that the authority must be previously notified of an intention to speak: ad hoc presentations to the Committee will not be accepted at the meeting.

Copies of the officers' reports will be available at least three days in advance of the meeting. For each report, officers' will make a recommendation to the Committee on how it is considered the application should be determined. When you see the recommendation, you may decide there is no need to address the Committee, though you do need to be aware that final decisions do not always follow the officers' recommendations. It is also important to bear in mind that many applications are determined under delegated powers and are not reported to the Planning Services Committee. Only major and more controversial applications are automatically reported to the Committee.

To speak at the Committee either against or in support of an application you must first have submitted a written representation in response to the application consultation procedure. Assuming you have made formal representations, you must then register your intention to speak with the Committee Clerk by 4 p.m. on the day of the meeting, and at the same time provide a short summary of your case.

In deciding whether to speak, you must also bear in mind that you will not be able to ask questions of either the Members of the Committee, the applicant or other speakers. Equally, Councillors will not ask you or others questions about the application or seek any clarification of your views.

At the Committee

You must arrive at the Council Chamber in the Civic Suite, Rayleigh by 6.45 p.m. on the evening of the meeting, that is 45 minutes before the meeting is

due to commence, and identify yourself to officers. You will then be shown where to sit and the arrangements explained to you.

You will be allowed a maximum of two minutes to make your statement. Two speakers will be allowed to speak for and two against the proposal, that is a maximum of four speakers in all. The Chairman has discretion to allow additional speakers.

You will be called to speak after the Planning Officer has been allowed an opportunity to update the Committee on additional letters of objection or support or other matters pertinent to the case. Do please bear in mind that the Committee will not answer questions about your statement. If present, the Parish/Town Council representative will also be called to make their statement. Once all statements have been made, it is likely that the Planning Officer will make some further comments prior to the Committee then determining the application. The Committee may proceed to debate the proposal before making a decision, though it may also be that a decision will be taken immediately.

If more than two people want to speak either for or against an application, it will be necessary to select someone to act as a spokesperson. In any event, this may be a sensible arrangement to follow where a petition has been submitted by a number of people. The applicant or his agent will be counted as one of the speakers in support. In other cases, the order of registration with the Committee Clerk will be the determining factor on whether you will be allowed to speak.

When you speak, please remember to say who you are, where you live, and whether you are representing a person, a firm or an organisation. You must address your comments directly to the Chairman of the Committee.

In making your statement it is important to bear in mind that there are strict guidelines set by Central Government within which planning authorities may decide applications. Therefore there are limits on the matters that the Committee can take into account in reaching a decision. These so-called 'material planning considerations' are fully explained in a free leaflet published by the Council and available from the receptions in Rochford and Rayleigh and on the Council's official website.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that where a decision has been reached to refuse an application, this may not be the end of the matter since applicants have the right to appeal to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for an independent assessment of the application.

Add address and contact details, etc.

Shaun Scrutton
Head of Planning Services
Etc...

