

PUBLIC SPEAKING AT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Issued April 2008

Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council has allowed public speaking at Planning Committee meetings since July 1996. The intention is to assist the Councillors on the Committee to reach a decision. Public speaking is allowed in order to amplify representations that have already been made in relation to a particular planning application.

All public speaking is at the discretion of the Chairman. However, under normal circumstances the following public speakers will be allowed in respect of each planning application:

- Any Councillor exercising their right to address the Committee following disclosure of a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct. A maximum of three minutes will be allowed. Following this address they must withdraw from the chamber.**
- Up to two objectors who in total will be allowed a maximum of six minutes to address the Committee. Where only one speaker has registered to speak they will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to address the Committee. If more than two objectors have registered to speak they will be invited prior to the meeting to select no more than two of their number to put their case*.**
- One representative of the Parish Council, if it is objecting to or supporting the application, who will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to address the meeting.**
- One Councillor not on the Planning Committee who will be allowed to address the Committee for up to three minutes. (Precedence will be given to ward councillors; and if there is more than one wishing to speak, preference will be given to the first one to register his/her wish to speak).**
- Up to two supporters (which may include the applicant or his/her agent), who in total will be allowed to address the Committee for up to six minutes. Where only one speaker has registered to speak they will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to address the Committee.**

This is also the order in which speakers shall be called.

These procedures may be varied at the discretion of the Chair in cases where there is an abnormal degree of public interest in a particular application.

Anyone applying to speak who cannot be accommodated under these arrangements will be given the name(s) of the Ward Councillor(s), who may make representations on their behalf.

The opportunity to speak in relation to an application only applies to applications being considered by the Planning Committee. Most applications are determined by officers under delegated powers; no rights of public address apply in these cases.

Other than the applicant and his/her agent, only those members of the public who have made written representations about the application shall be permitted to speak. Such representations should normally be made prior to the end of the period specified in neighbour notification/site notices, but where such representations are received up to the point where the register of people wishing to speak is closed (12.00 noon on the Friday before the Committee meeting), those making representations will be allowed to address the Committee subject to the rules and arrangements specified.

Anyone who has written to the Planning Department regarding an application which is going before Committee will be advised by letter when the application on which they have commented is going before Committee. This will normally happen one week before the Committee meeting. Anyone wishing to speak (including councillors) will normally be asked to notify the Committee Services Officer no later than 12 noon on the Friday preceding the meeting. The Committee Services Officer will record those requests in the order in which they are received.

Provided they agree and provide relevant contact details, those wishing to object to an application will be put in touch with one another by the Committee Services Officer (if there are more than two) so that they can decide which of their number should represent them. If they can reach such agreement, they should inform the Committee Services Officer at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the Committee meeting. In the absence of such an agreement, the person who was first to register their intention to address the Committee will be given the opportunity to speak.

Requests will only be logged as above when they have been received by the Committee Services Officer.

The allocation of time will be monitored by timer and will be strictly enforced.

Speakers must ensure that, as far as possible, their statement relates only to planning policies and relevant considerations. Matters which cannot be regarded as planning considerations include issues such as:

Loss of personal view from a particular property.

Loss of property value.

The development differs from that which the developer indicated to you.

**Disputes over land ownership.
Doubt over the integrity or motives of the applicant.
Objections to the principle of development where an outline
planning
permission exists.**

This list is not an exhaustive list.

Public speakers should refrain from informal contact and discussion with members of the Committee prior to the start of the meeting.

Public speakers should note that direct comments about anyone concerned in the planning process are not appropriate. Criticism, whether direct or implied, of individuals will be considered to be unreasonable behaviour (see below).

Public speakers may not question Committee Members or Council officers, or take any further part in the discussion of the application once they have made their representations.

Public speakers are not permitted to circulate written material, photographs etc to the Committee; they must restrict their contributions to oral address.

No questioning of a speaker or immediate comment on their contribution is permitted. The facility is an opportunity to address the Committee, not to engage in discussion or debate. If a speaker is unclear, that is his/her responsibility.

After the period of address by members of the public, Parish representatives and/or councillors, the Planning Officer will be given an opportunity to comment on points made, clarify any apparent confusion or inaccuracy, and in particular to point out any matters raised which are not material planning considerations and which the Committee must not take into account when coming to its decision.

Code of Conduct at Planning Meetings

Please remember, consideration of planning applications is best achieved in a calm and objective manner. Although an application may be an emotive subject for some members of the public present at Committee and they may have strong views on the subject, persons present are requested to behave in a reasonable manner whilst in Committee.

Any unreasonable or disruptive behaviour will lead to the removal of those persons from the Meeting.

- * **Contact details of objectors will not be released without their permission.**