

A Guide to Speaking at the Planning Committee



INTRODUCTION

“Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the pioneer local authorities in giving members of the public the opportunity to attend its Planning Committee meetings to speak directly to the Committee about any planning application being considered at the meeting.

It has allowed objectors and applicants to present, in their own words, any concerns they may have on how a planning application might affect them. This opportunity has been welcomed by both sides and has been held up as a model of good practice amongst local planning authorities.

This leaflet explains how the scheme operates and answers some of the questions you may have about procedures and what to expect at the meeting. It is based on simple rules that make the system as fair and easy to operate as possible, so please read the entire leaflet”.



Councillor Mike Adams – Chair Planning Committee

1. How does the Planning Committee work?

The Committee does not determine all applications. The majority of applications are determined by the Council's Officers under the Council's delegation scheme and are not subject to the procedures described in this leaflet. It is only the applications that are to be decided by the Committee that you are able to speak on. However if any Member has any concerns about an application under this delegation scheme, then he or she can request that it be placed before the Planning Committee for them to determine.

Please telephone the Case Officer dealing with the application to see whether the application in which you are interested is to be considered by the Planning Committee and the date of the meeting. The name of the Case Officer and their contact details will be found on correspondence dealing with the application or by telephoning 01495 235320.

The Planning Committee is made up of a Chair, Vice Chair and 18 other Councillors. Members of the Committee receive written reports on planning applications to be considered. The report will contain recommendations, in most cases either to grant permission subject to conditions or to refuse for reasons that are set out in the report. However, it is the Members of the Planning Committee who will make the final decision, after considering all the circumstances.

2. Where are the meetings held and who can attend?

The meetings are held in the Council Chamber at Penallta House, Tredomen. As the meetings are open to the public, the Press and the general public may attend and listen to the debate. The Chamber is fully accessible to wheelchair users and is fitted with an induction loop facility for people with impaired hearing.

3. Do I need to attend the meeting to make any comments known to the Committee?

NO – your written comments will have been summarised in the Officer's report (subject to submission to the planning department within the consultation period) or will be verbally outlined for consideration by the Committee.

4. How can I find out when an application will be considered?

The Planning Committee meets every four weeks at 5.00pm at the Council Chamber. The Committee agenda is normally published by the Wednesday in the week before the Committee meeting, and can be obtained via our website (www.caerphilly.gov.uk) or by telephoning Committee Services on 01443 864420. The dates and times of meetings together with a list of Members on the Committee are available on request from Committee Services. You are welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, a minimum notice period of 3 working days is required should you wish to do so. A simultaneous translation will be provided if requested. Please also ask as soon as possible if you require a copy of the relevant report(s) in Welsh or any other language, in large print or other format e.g. Braille or audio. Please telephone Committee Services on 01443 864420 for details.

5. How do I arrange to speak at a meeting?

Applicants and objectors who wish to speak must notify Committee Services (Tel: 01443 864420 or e-mail committeeservices@caerphilly.gov.uk) by 5.00pm on the Monday before the Committee meeting where the application is to be decided.

This allows the other party an opportunity to speak and lets the Chair know how many members of the public wish to speak. You will need to tell us the address and reference number of the application you wish to speak on, together with your contact details.

If you wish to address the meeting in Welsh or another language, or if you require the services of a British Sign Language interpreter, please let Committee Services know beforehand so that arrangements can be made to meet your requirements. Every effort will be made, but please inform us as soon as possible or there may not be sufficient time to make the necessary arrangements.

If for any reason an applicant or objector is unable to attend the meeting at which the application is to be considered, they may appoint a representative to speak on their behalf or submit their representations in writing.

5. How do I arrange to speak at a meeting? (continued)



Only one representative of the objector(s) and one for the applicant will be allowed to speak. If there are several objectors or supporters who wish to speak on an application a spokesperson should be nominated.

To assist you in deciding who should speak, we will ask you if we can pass your name and telephone number to other objectors (or supporters), so that you can agree amongst yourselves who will be the spokesperson. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair may allow more than one person to speak.

Even if you have given notice that you wish to speak at the meeting you can change your mind and decide not to.

6. What happens at the meeting?

On the day of the Committee meeting please arrive at reception at Penallta House, Tredomen by 4.45pm. You should make yourself known to the Committee Services Officer, who will guide you to a seat in the public gallery at the back of the Council Chamber.

Copies of the agenda and reports are available at the meeting, although you may have to share these. It may be difficult to accommodate late arrivals. Any person not present when an application is considered will lose the opportunity to address the Committee.

The Chair will introduce each planning application and invite each speaker to the front of the Chamber to address the Committee.

Members of the public speak in the following order:

- Objector (or their representative)
- Applicant (or their agent)

Both speakers must address the same meeting of the Committee. All persons wishing to speak on an application are limited to five minutes each. The Chair will strictly apply this maximum address time and you will be asked to return to the public gallery after that time and take no further part in the meeting.

Speakers will not be allowed to ask questions of the Councillors or Officers, Committee Members are not able to question speakers directly but can seek points of clarification through the Chair with responses delivered by Officers.

6. What happens at the meeting? (continued)

Members of the Planning Committee will then debate the matter and arrive at a decision. If following its consideration an application is deferred to a future meeting of the Planning Committee for a decision, then there will be no further opportunity to address the Committee.

The Planning Committee considers many applications at its meeting but deals with those applications on which there are speakers at the start of the meeting. Having listened to the debate on your particular application you can either leave or remain in the public gallery and listen to the remainder of the meeting. If you decide to leave, please do so quietly. If you decide to stay, please remain quiet.

Minutes of the meeting will be taken, to record the names of speakers, which application they referred to and to the decision made. Minutes of previous meetings are available from our website (www.caerphilly.gov.uk). However, you should be aware that a note of your oral comments may be taken and will be publicly available under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Please note that the laws of slander are very strict. If you say something defamatory in public about a person that is untrue, you may be at risk of legal action. Similarly, you should ensure your comments are not discriminatory.

7. What happens if a site visit is called for?

Members are able to request a site visit prior to the application being considered in accordance with Caerphilly Council's Constitution.

All site visits will take place on the Monday before Planning Committee for applications being reported to that committee.

The purpose of the site visit is to look at the application site enabling Members present to question/clarify points of the planning application with Officers. Representation(s) from third parties will not be heard.

If there is a site visit objectors and applicants should check with Committee Services by telephoning 01443 864420 or email committeeservices@caerphilly.gov.uk

8. Can I use slides or overhead transparencies, video presentations or circulate supporting documents?



NO – slides or overhead transparencies or video presentations are not allowed. If you wish to circulate supporting documents or photographs you should first discuss this with Committee Services. Should you be allowed to circulate such documents, you will be responsible for supplying sufficient copies.

Additionally, if any applicant or objector wishes the Committee to consider any further supporting evidence, correspondence or other documentation that has become available after publication of the Officer's report, and is not contained in that report, copies must be provided to the Development Control Manager at least 48 hours before the Committee meeting at which the application is to be considered.

9. What should I say at the meeting?

It is best to prepare what you want to say in advance and time yourself to make sure you can fit it into 5 minutes. You are likely to have the greatest impact if you:

- Are brief and to the point
- Limit your view to the planning application
- Focus on the relevant planning issues

10. What are the relevant issues in considering proposals?

The relevant issues will vary with the nature of the proposal, but examples will include the following:

- The Development Plan
- Welsh Government guidance
- Sustainability issues
- Previous planning decisions
- Noise, disturbance, smells
- Residential amenity
- Traffic generation, highway safety and parking
- Design, appearance, materials, density and layout
- Impact on trees, listed buildings and conservation areas
- Public open space

11. What issues are usually irrelevant in considering proposals?

These will vary from case to case but the following are usually irrelevant:

- Those controlled by other legislation (e.g. Building Regulations)
- Boundary or land ownership disputes
- The developer's morals or motives
- Suspected further development
- Loss of view over other people's land
- Effects on property value
- Covenants
- Private rights of way

Although such comments may be of importance to you, they are not necessarily planning issues and may carry little weight when the Committee make a decision on the application.

12. The role of the County Borough Councillors

Councillors are elected to represent you on the County Borough Council. You may like to contact your Councillor to discuss the planning application. However, if they are a member of the Planning Committee they will not be able to commit themselves to a decision before hearing all the evidence and debate at the relevant Committee meeting. If you wish a Councillor to represent your views at the Planning Committee then it is advisable to contact a Councillor who is not on the Committee.

Councillors who wish to address to Committee must notify Committee Services by 5.00pm on the Tuesday before the Committee meeting where the application is to be decided, so please speak to you Local Ward Members as soon as possible if you wish them to represent your views at the meeting. They are also limited to a five minute address period and will speak after the objector and/or applicant.



13. Who do I ask if I have any other queries?

If you have any questions not answered by this leaflet, or any other comments please contact Committee Services on **01443 864420** or email **committeeservices@caerphilly.gov.uk**

This guide is available in Welsh, other languages or formats on request.

Mae'r canllaw hwn ar gael yn Gymraeg ac mewn ieithoedd neu fformatau eraill ar gais.