

APPENDIX 6

PUBLIC SPEAKING ON PLANNING APPLICATIONS

An explanation of the system for those wishing to speak

HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY AT A DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

This information 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 agreed by the Council to make the system as fair and easy to operate as possible, so please read all of the information.

How does the Development Management Committee work?

Not all applications are determined by the Committee. The majority of straightforward applications are decided under the Council's delegation scheme and are not subject to procedures described here. 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 Development Management Committee or discuss its progress.

The Committee is made up of a Chair, Vice-Chair and 9 other Councillors. The Press may attend the meetings. Committee Members receive written reports on planning applications being considered by the Committee.

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

No - your written comments will have been briefly summarised in the officer report and will be considered by the Committee anyway. As the meetings are open to the public you may, if you wish, attend the meeting just to see what happens.

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

A Development Management Committee is usually held on a Monday evening once a month. It can, however, be held on other days of the week. The Committee agenda is normally published at the latest 5 clear working days before the Committee meeting. The dates and times of meetings are available on request together with a list of Members. Please telephone the Committee Services Section on 0151 511 8276.

How do I arrange to speak at a meeting?

When an application is to be considered by the Committee, the applicant, objectors and supporters will be notified of the meeting and may request or download a form which will need to be completed if they wish to speak at the meeting.

- In cases where a petition or in excess of 25 standardised letters are received only the lead name and/or the first ten letters received in respect of the application will be notified.
- The form must be received by the Planning Department by 16:00 on the working day (normally a Friday) before the Committee meeting, at the very latest.
- On the day of the Committee please arrive at the venue between 18:00 and 18:15 to register your intention to speak. It may be difficult to accommodate late arrivals.

A Council Officer will explain to those wishing to speak how the Committee procedures are organised.

- If there are several objectors and/or supporters who wish to speak on an application each group will need to organise a spokesperson. Only one person from the objectors and one from the supporters will be allowed to speak. However, even though you have given notice that you wish to speak at the meeting you can change your mind and decide not to speak.
- Only one person can speak in support on behalf of the applicant, either the applicant or agent.

What is the order of speaking on each application?

The Chair will, if necessary, explain the process and introduce each planning application by referring to the application number and details of it.

Members of the public can then speak in the following order:

- Objector (5 minutes)
- Supporter (5 minutes)
- Parish Council (5 Minutes)
- Ward Councillors (maximum of 10 minutes)
- Applicant/Agent (5 minutes)

You will be asked by the Chair of the Development Management Committee to move to a designated seat before you speak. The five-minute limit will be strictly applied by the Chair and you will be asked to return to the public seating after that time.

The Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation will then bring any necessary information, in addition to that in the Officer report, to the Committee's attention. Members of the Development Management Committee will then debate the matter either to approve, refuse or defer it for amendments/further information. The public cannot take part, and a decision will be made. Any points of clarification raised by Members will be dealt with by Officers. Delegated authority may also be given to the Operational Director to deal with the application e.g. following negotiations and amendments.

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 you must discuss this with the case officer in the first instance. If you decide to send information direct to Councillors that is your responsibility. A list of Councillors names is available from the Members' Office on 0151 511 8276. Please do not send documents to the Council for this purpose.

What can I say at the meeting?

You are advised to make a statement of fact or opinion, but you are likely to have the greatest impact if you:

- Are brief and to the point
- Limit your views to the planning application
- Focus on the relevant planning issues which may help the Committee reach their decision.

What are the relevant issues in considering proposals?

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

- ✓ The Council's Development Plan
- ✓ Planning Practice Guidance
- ✓ National Planning Policy Framework
- ✓ Planning Law and Legal Precedents
- ✓ Noise, disturbance, smells
- ✓ Residential amenity
- ✓ Design, appearance and layout
- ✓ Impact on trees, listed buildings, conservation areas, and archaeological heritage
- ✓ Public open space provision

What issues are usually irrelevant in considering proposals?

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

- ✓ Matters covered by other laws, licences and environmental controls
- ✓ Boundary or area disputes
- ✓ The developer's morals or motives
- ✓ Suspected further development
- ✓ Loss of view over other people's land
- ✓ Effects on value of property
- ✓ Personal matters
- ✓ Land ownership

You should particularly note that the laws of slander are very strict. If you say something defamatory in public about a person that is untrue, even if you believe it to be true, you may be at risk of legal action. You should therefore think carefully about any criticisms you may wish to make about people when speaking at the Committee.

Where are the Committee meetings held?

The venue alternates between Runcorn Town Hall and Municipal Building Widnes. You can check this on the Council's web site. Meetings usually start at 18:30. If you have completed a form asking to speak you must arrive at the venue between 18:00 and 18:15 to register your intention to speak.

Attendees should be aware that members of the press and public who are present during the public part of a meeting, have the right to film, audio-record, take photographs and use social media (such as tweeting and blogging) to report proceedings of meetings.

How are Parish Councils involved?

Parish Councils are consulted on all relevant planning applications within their area. For details of your Parish Council clerk please contact Democratic Services on 0151 511 8380.

The role of Borough Councillors:

You may like to contact your Councillor to discuss a planning application. If you wish a Councillor to represent your views at the Committee then it is advisable to contact a Councillor who is not on the Committee itself. Any Councillor who sits on the Committee will not be able to commit him or herself to a decision before hearing all the evidence and debate at the relevant Development Management Committee meeting.

Who do I ask if I have any other queries?

If you have any questions or any other comments please contact the case officer responsible for the planning applications or:

Operational Director –Planning and Transport
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Building
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

Tel: 0151 511 6160

Email: dev.control@halton.gov.uk