

A guide to speaking at the Planning Committee

Introduction

Most planning decisions are made by Planning Officers, under so-called 'delegated powers' however some decisions are made by the Planning Committee. This usually includes very controversial applications, applications made by officers and members of the Council and any other application where a Member considers that the decision should be made by the Committee.

The circumstances where an application must be determined by the Planning Committee are set out in the council constitution [[Browse - Constitution | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](http://bracknell-forest.gov.uk)]. These include where an application is being recommended for approval and has attracted 5 valid planning objections from different households or other organisations.

When planning applications are heard by the Planning Committee, there is an opportunity for applicants and members of the public to speak for and against the application. The information that they provide is very useful in helping the Committee to reach a sound planning decision.

What is the Planning Committee?

The Planning Committee is the Council committee which meets to consider planning applications which cannot be decided by council officers under delegated powers.

The Committee is made up of 12 Councillors from all political parties and, as a formal meeting of the Council, has to be run according to certain legal requirements. In determining planning applications, Members of the Planning Committee are required to bear in mind that their overriding duty is to the whole community, not just to the people in their Ward and that they should take decisions impartially, that do not favour, or appear to favour any persons, business or locality irrespective of other considerations.

Officers of the Council attend all meetings to advise the Committee.

All members of the public are welcome to attend formal meetings of the Planning Committee to listen to the debate and the decisions being taken.

How do I know an application I am interested in is going to Committee

If you have written to the council during the consultation period about an application, you will receive a letter informing you of the date it is due to be presented to the committee and inviting you to attend the meeting.

The Committee agenda is published 5 working days before the meeting and can be viewed online via this link:
<http://democratic.bracknellforest.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteId=585>.

The letter you will receive will identify if the application will be eligible for public speaking.

Which applications are eligible for public speaking?

Public speaking is only permitted in the case of applications where there have been:

- a) 10 or more objections from separate households or businesses received at least 10 working days before the date of the Committee meeting, or
- b) a petition signed by more than 50 signatories, including addresses, is received at least 10 working days before the date of the Committee meeting,

Who is allowed to speak at Planning Committee?

The following individuals and/or organisations can speak:

- A representative on behalf of objectors,
- A representative on behalf of supporters;
- The applicant or his/her representative

Only one person can speak for the application and one person against. Therefore, if an application is being recommended for refusal, only the applicant or their agent would be able to speak in favour of the application.

In the event that, no one registers to speak against an application being recommended for approval, the applicant will not be given the opportunity to speak. It should be noted that no one is required to speak.

An application may be deferred by the Committee if further information is to be requested. If the application is deferred without debate taking place and public speaking did not take place, speakers will be invited to speak when the application is debated at a future meeting. If a planning application is deferred by the planning committee after speakers have been heard, the speakers will not get another chance to address the Committee at a future meeting.

On occasion, an application is returned to Committee after an initial resolution has been made, for example if amendments to the terms of any legal agreement are being sought or material changes are being proposed to the scheme. In such instances, public speaking will not be allowed unless the proposed change is material in nature, has required further advertising or notification of neighbours and has attracted 10 or more additional objections.

How do I register to speak?

To speak at the committee meeting you must register with the council by midday at least 3 working days before the day of the meeting (i.e. 12 noon on the preceding Monday for a Thursday meeting). Requests to speak made after the deadline will not be accepted.

If you wish to register to speak, please email the Planning Support Team at development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk giving your name and contact details.

Public speakers will be able to speak in person at Time Square or via remote link. A current email address is required in order to receive further details and the invitation to join the virtual meeting.

Speakers are registered on a first come, first served basis. Where there is more than one person who wishes to speak in relation to an application, their contact details will be shared

with others wishing to speak to allow the opportunity for them to agree a single spokesperson. Public speakers are therefore strongly encouraged to get together and agree a joint case and appoint a representative. If the arrangements change, this is a matter for the objectors to resolve and inform the Council accordingly, prior to the meeting.

The start time for the Planning Committee is currently 6.30pm however it is recommended that you check for any updates on the day of the meeting, which could include the deferral of an item, which will be referred to in the Supplementary Report for a particular meeting, accessed from the following link:

[Browse meetings - Planning Committee | Bracknell Forest Council \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://bracknell-forest.gov.uk/browsetheplanningcommittee)

If you intend to speak in person, it is requested that you arrive at the Council Chamber between 6.10pm and 6.20pm. You will be asked to wait in the waiting area and will be brought into the Chamber with the other members of the public attending prior to the start of the meeting. The Democratic Services Officer will come and find you prior to the meeting starting to confirm you are in attendance.

The running order of the Committee is a matter for the Committee Chair however generally applications eligible for public speaking will be taken first in order to avoid unnecessary waiting around.

Can I provide handouts or use visual aids?

No handouts may be distributed at the meeting. These should have been provided with your written representations during the consultation period in order to allow time to assess the validity, or otherwise, of the points being raised. To ensure fairness to all parties, everyone needs to have the opportunity to consider any such information in advance to ensure that any decision is reasonably taken and to avoid potential challenge.

In the event that you wish to use an electronic presentation, this should be provided to Democratic Services [committee@bracknell-forest.gov.uk] a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

If you intend to address the meeting remotely, it is recommended that you provide a script of your comments to Democratic Services in order that these can be read to the meeting by an officer in case of network connection failure.

An application will not be deferred from consideration by the Committee if a public speaker fails to attend or is unable to join the meeting remotely.

Order of speakers

The order of speakers at Committee will be as follows:

- The Planning Officer will introduce the application
- The objector will speak
- The supporter/applicant/agent will speak

Members may ask questions of fact of both the objector and the applicant or their agent. They will then ask questions of the officers before moving on to the debate. Any person who addresses the meeting as part of the public speaking process will not be able to take part in the debate, nor ask questions of the Committee or officers.

What am I able to speak about?

The Chair will invite those people who have registered to speak to address the committee. Each speaker will have up to **3** minutes. When addressing the committee, members of the public should limit their comments to relevant planning issues ('material considerations') such as:

- the impact of the development on the character of the area;
- external design, appearance and layout;
- impact of the development on neighbouring properties;
- highway safety;
- planning policy and government guidance.

Matters not relevant to planning would include:

- trade objections from potential competitors;
- personal comments about the applicant;
- loss of a view
- devaluation of property
- the developer's motives;
- moral arguments;
- matters covered by other areas of law;
- boundary disputes or other private property rights (including restrictive covenants).

Should you require any further information, please contact development.control@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.