

PLANNING COMMITTEE PROTOCOL

1. This protocol is intended to ensure that planning decisions made at the Planning Committee meeting are reached, and are seen to be, in a fair, open and impartial manner, and that only relevant planning matters are taken into account.
2. Planning Committee is a quasi-judicial body, empowered by the Borough Council to determine planning applications in accordance with its constitution. In making legally binding decisions therefore, it is important that the committee meeting is run in an ordered way, with Councillors, officers and members of the public understanding their role within the process.
3. In terms of Councillors' role at the Planning Committee, whilst Councillors have a special duty to their ward constituents, including those who did not vote for them, their over-riding duty is to the whole borough. Therefore, whilst it is acceptable to approach Councillors before the meeting, no opinion will be given, as this would compromise their ability to consider the application at the meeting itself. The role of Councillors at committee is not to represent the views of their constituents, but to consider planning applications in the interests of the whole Borough. When voting on applications, Councillors may therefore decide to vote against the views expressed by their constituents. Members may also request that their votes are recorded.
4. Planning Committee meetings are in public and members of the public are welcome to attend and observe; however, they are not allowed to address the meeting unless they have an interest in a planning application and follow the correct procedure.
5. Speaking at Planning Committee is restricted to applicants for planning permission, residents and residents' associations who have made written comments to the Council about the application and these have been received before the committee report is published. Professional agents representing either applicants or residents are not allowed to speak on their behalf. A maximum of 3 minutes per speaker is allowed, so where more than 1 person wishes to address the meeting, all parties with a common interest should normally agree who should represent them. No additional material or photographs will be allowed to be presented to the committee.
6. Other than as detailed above, no person is permitted to address the Planning Committee and interruptions to the proceedings will not be tolerated. Should the meeting be interrupted, the Chairman will bring the meeting to order. In exceptional circumstances the Chairman can suspend the meeting, or clear the chamber and continue behind closed doors, or adjourn the meeting to a future date.
7. After Councillors have debated the application, a vote will be taken. If Councillors wish to take a decision contrary to Officer recommendation, a motion to do so will be moved, seconded and voted upon. Where the decision is to refuse permission contrary to Officer recommendation, the motion will include reasons for refusal which are relevant to the planning considerations on the application, and which are capable of being supported and substantiated should an appeal be lodged. The Chairman may wish to adjourn the meeting for a short time for Officers to assist in drafting the reasons for refusal. The Chairman may move that the vote be recorded.
8. Where members of the public wish to leave the chamber before the end of the meeting, they should do so in an orderly and respectful manner, refraining from talking until they have passed through the chamber doors, as talking within the foyer can disrupt the meeting.