



Public Speaking at Planning Committees:

Cambridge City Council Planning Committee

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Planning Committee meetings, this guide sets out how we allow the public to speak at Committee – including who can speak, how to register, the length of speaking time and policy on presentation of material.

1. What is the Planning Committee

Planning Committee is a Regulatory Committee consisting of elected Councillors who are responsible for determining planning applications which cannot be dealt with under delegated powers to officers.

2. When and where do Planning Committee meetings take place?

- City Planning Committee usually takes place from 10am the first Wednesday of the month at The Guildhall, Market Square, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ.
- Alternative venues may be used; details will be set out on the agenda and meeting webpage.

3. Can anyone attend Planning Committee meetings?

- Meetings of the Planning Committee are open to the public, so anyone can attend and listen to the meetings.
- Despite being a public meeting, in some very occasional cases, the law does allow the committee to consider some matters in private. For example, an application may contain information of a personal or commercially sensitive nature that the Council would not be able to publicise. In every case, however, the public interest in excluding the press and public from the meeting room must outweigh the public interest in having the information disclosed.

4. Can anyone speak at Planning Committee meetings

- The Planning Committee welcomes public participation at the meeting; examples of those who may wish to speak at the meeting include applicants or an applicant's agent, neighbours or other residents, community groups, Parish Council representatives¹ (where applicable) and Councillors.
- Councillors will need to advise in what capacity they are speaking i.e. Ward Councillor etc and whilst not limited to 3 minutes, should ensure that they succinctly focus on material planning grounds.
- Speakers may speak in support or objection to an application.
- You must register at least two working days before the meeting (more information on registering to speak is set out below)

5. How do I register to speak at Planning Committee?

- Public speaking requests must be registered with the Democratic Services Team by no later than 12noon 2 working days before the meeting (i.e. the Monday before the Wednesday).
- City Planning Committee: Democratic.Services@cambridge.gov.uk
- Requests received after this time will not be allowed.
- Registration by email preferred.
- Speaking requests should include your name, email address, telephone number, the application you wish to speak to as well as the capacity in which you are attending.
- Speakers are encouraged to submit a written copy of their planned speech by 12 noon two working days before the meeting, to be used as a backup in case the speaker is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances.

6. How can I attend the meeting?

- Public speakers can attend the meeting in-person, or virtually via Microsoft Teams.

¹ Representatives of a Parish Council must have the formal agreement of the Parish Council to represent their views

- The Democratic Services Team will provide further guidance for attending each venue.
- There is no need to have made a previous written comment on the planning application to register to speak at committee.
- The agenda for the meeting is set at the time of publication. It is not possible to guarantee when an item will be determined. Public speakers should be prepared to address the Committee at any time after the beginning of the meeting.

7. How should I plan what to say at the meeting?

- Each category of public speaking (see paragraph 11 below) is limited to 3 minutes (excluding councillors).
- If more than one person registers to speak per category, the speaking time may be split between the different speakers, or a spokesperson could be appointed.
- The Chair of the meeting has discretion to extend the 3-minute time period for all speaking categories should the application require it. This will be set at the chairs briefing for that committee, however, it can be reviewed at the committee.
- Committee members will have read the planning officer written reports, so try to avoid repeating points that are already explained in that material. Focus your speech on material planning grounds, these can include (but are not limited to):
 - Overlooking/loss of privacy
 - Loss of light or overshadowing
 - Parking
 - Highway safety
 - Traffic
 - Noise
 - Effect on listed building and conservation area
 - Layout and density of building
 - Design, appearance and materials
 - Government policy
 - Disabled persons' access
 - Proposals in the Development Plan

- Previous planning decisions (including appeal decisions)
 - Nature conservation
- Practice in advance of the meeting to ensure you can deliver your speech within the 3 minutes.
- Speakers should be careful not to say anything derogatory or inflammatory, which could expose them to the risk of legal action.
- The Chair will say when the speaking time is almost finished to allow time to round up.
- Speakers will be stopped once the speaking time has finished.
- Speakers cannot question Councillors, officers or other speakers and must limit their comments to planning related issues.

8. Guidance about written statements

- If you are not able to attend the committee meeting and wish to submit a written statement, it must be emailed to the Democratic Services Team by 12 noon 2 working days before the meeting.
- A written statement should be no longer than one side of A4 in size 12 font.
- Any inappropriate statements will not be accepted.
- Written statements will not be read out at the meeting but will be published on the meeting webpage.
- Written statements will not be accepted after the deadline.

9. Guidance about virtual attendance

- The Council will endeavour to facilitate online attendance at meetings via the Microsoft Teams platform. However please note the council will take no responsibility for any individual who is unable connect into the meeting. Meetings will proceed in-person in the event of any technical difficulties
- The Democratic Services Teams are unable to provide ICT support for virtual attendance at meetings.

10. Can I submit images to be displayed when I'm speaking

- Yes, but images must be submitted to the Democratic Services Team by 12 noon, two working days before the meeting.

- Any inappropriate images will not be accepted
- The images will need to be verified by the planning officer in advance of the meeting and an officer will display them while you are speaking.
- Images will be uploaded onto the online planning register.

11. What are the categories for public speaking?

- Petitioner (if applicable)
- Speakers in objection
- Speakers in support – including the applicant / agent / supporters
- Councillors – more than one councillor can speak on an item

12. How are applications considered?

- A planning officer will introduce the item.
- Public speakers will be invited to speak.
- The Planning Committee will discuss/ debate the application.
- The Planning Committee will take a vote on either the officer recommendation in the agenda or a proposal made by a Planning Committee member.
- Should the Committee propose to follow a course of action different to officer recommendation, Councillors must give sound planning reasons for doing so.

13. Chair's discretion to manage the meeting

This document lays out the standard public speaking procedures at a Planning Committee. The Chair can vary from these procedures at their discretion to accommodate extenuating circumstances.