

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

- 1.1 Subject to the rules in Section 2, the Planning Committee will hear oral representations in respect of any planning application (see definition of application at paragraph 2.18) which is on the agenda for the meeting.
- 1.2 The Council's current nominated officers are Sjanet Wickenden and Lesley Blue (Direct Lines – 01234 718843 or 228819 email: righttospeak@bedford.gov.uk) who will also provide details of all Committee meetings.

2.0 RULES

- 2.1 The names of those persons wishing to speak at the Committee must be given to, and agreed by, the Council's nominated officer no later than the close of offices (5.15 pm Monday to Thursday and 4.45 pm on Fridays) on the working day before the date of the meeting of the Committee. Late objectors will not be allowed to address the Committee, nor will the application be deferred if prospective speakers are unable to attend the Committee. The scheme extends to Members with a personal and prejudicial interest in an application. After exercising the right to speak, and answering any questions, the Member must then leave the room for the remainder of the consideration of the item, and should not seek improperly to influence the decision on the matter. In all other cases, Members of the Council may only be permitted to address the Committee in accordance with the Chair's general discretion under the Council's Constitution.
- 2.2 Applications recommended for permission/approval:
It is stressed that representations to the Planning Committee where the officer recommendation is for approval are objector led. If objectors are attending to make representations in respect of an application recommended for approval, having given due notice (see 2.1 above), a similar facility will be granted to the applicant (or applicant's representative). If there are no objectors attending to make representations on an application there will be no right to speak in support for either the applicant or local council.
- 2.3 Applications recommended for refusal:
The Planning Committee will also hear representations, duly notified (paragraph 2.1), from local councils, applicants (or applicant's representatives) (together referred to as "supporters"), and/or objectors where the Officer's recommendation is for refusal of any planning application (paragraph 2.1 above applies). For the avoidance of doubt local councils will always retain the right to an independent five minute time allocation to address committee notwithstanding who else speaks.
- 2.4 All parties (including local councils) wishing to speak about an application must do so within the five minutes allocated to them. (Refer to 2.5 below).
- 2.5 Where a number of objectors or supporters attend the meeting on a particular application, one of the objectors or supporters should be nominated to speak on behalf of all the objectors or supporters concerned. However, if there are two distinct and separate areas of objection or support, two objectors or supporters may be allowed to address the Committee at the discretion of the Chair of the meeting. The overall time allocated will not be allowed to extend beyond five minutes, but this is without prejudice to the Chair's discretion in paragraph 2.17.
- 2.6 Objectors and/or supporters must be acting in their own right and on their own behalf (or on behalf of an amenity group, society or local council). A representative may be appropriate if more than one objector or supporter wishes to be heard. Objections must relate to aspects of the development which will be of specific detriment to the objector(s) or those they represent. The applicant may speak and/or be represented by an agent.
- 2.7 All persons addressing the Committee will be required to confine their comments to proper, material planning considerations.

2.8 Before the Meeting:

All those persons who have made arrangements to make oral representations will be expected to be in the Committee Room at the commencement of the meeting. Specific times cannot be given as the progress of the meeting is dependent upon the business before the Committee. Any person not present when an application is considered will lose the opportunity to address the Committee.

2.9 If an applicant/objector/supporter/local council feels that the officer's report to the Committee contains factual errors or that plans are thought to be inaccurate these points must be dealt with in writing prior to the meeting, and in so doing allow reasonable time for the officers to check any claim. They will not be the subject of oral representations at the meeting.

2.10 Procedure at the Meeting:

Items on the agenda will either be taken in printed order or in such other order as the Chair decides at the meeting. After the relevant Council Officer has outlined the development and updated the written report as necessary speakers will be called to make their representations before the Committee discusses the application concerned.

2.11 Objectors will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to address the Committee (see 2.4 to 2.7 above). At the end of their address Members of the Committee may ask questions of the objectors.

2.12 Supporters will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to address the Committee (see 2.4 to 2.7 above). At the end of their address Members of the Committee may ask questions of the supporters.

2.13 Local Councils (i.e. Town, Parish and Urban Community Councils) will be allowed a maximum of five minutes to address the Committee. At the end of their address Members of the Committee may ask questions of the local councils.

2.14 Circulation of additional written documents in support of oral representations will not be allowed. Photographs, plans or illustrations may not be displayed or circulated at the meeting.

2.15 There will be no opportunity for those addressing the Committee to cross-examine one another, nor to question Members of the Committee or Council Officers. Those addressing the Committee will not be permitted to join in the debate.

2.16 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. However where the officer recommendation in respect of an application is to change from that appearing in the published report from grant to refuse or vice versa, there will be no right to speak on the item on that occasion. Consideration of the item will be deferred until the following meeting. At that second meeting the Right to Speak Scheme will then apply as though the application has appeared in the published report for the first time. However there will be no deferment in respect of Telecom applications submitted under the prior notification procedure, as statutory time limits apply.

If however, Members are minded to refuse an application recommended for approval in respect of which **the applicant has not had the opportunity to address the Committee** (i.e. because no objector initiated the process) then that application will be deferred to the next meeting so as to afford the applicant (and others) the right to speak.

2.17 The Chair of the Committee will have absolute discretion in the interpretation of these rules. In particular the Chair may in his/her absolute discretion (for example when considering major or controversial applications) extend the right to speak up to maximum period of 30 minutes, namely six speakers at five minutes each. In addition the Chair may in his/her absolute discretion permit the local MP to address the

Committee for a maximum of five minutes. In both cases the applicant or its agent will be afforded a reasonable period to respond, not exceeding ten minutes in total. 6(8)

- 2.18 “Applications” include applications for planning permission, and any other applications, matters or notifications which are before the Committee for determination. This would include for example Trees in Conservation Areas, Hedge Retention Notices, Tree Preservation Orders and Telecommunications notifications. In cases where an appeal has been lodged in the case of a failure of the Council to determine an application and the Planning Committee is being asked to consider what its reason(s) for refusal would have been there shall be no right to speak in relation to that item.

GENERAL NOTE

A summary of these rules accompanies the acknowledgement of applications received by the Council and all initial consultation letters issued by the Council. Thereafter it is the responsibility of the interested party to check the progress of the matter and liaise with the Council’s nominated officer in order to take up the opportunity to address the Committee.