

Part 9: Planning Committee Procedure Rules

(Reviewed October 2025)

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9.1 Membership

In accordance with Government guidance, it is council policy that every member of the Council must receive formal training in the planning system before serving on Planning Committee. Similarly, any present or newly elected Member participating in the determination of a planning application by Full Council, must receive such training prior to such participation.

The Chair of Council or of Planning Committee, as the case may be, will be cognisant of those Members who have not undertaken training and will rule accordingly if Members who have not been trained seek to participate in determining planning applications.

Planning Committee membership must be made up primarily of non-executive members, but with specific reservation of a place for the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Planning and Development Management.

9.2 Requests by the Public to Address the Planning Committee

1. Members of the public, including the applicant (or their agent / representative), representatives from the relevant Town or Parish Council(s), local interest groups and local civic societies, and the local District Ward Member(s), if not a member of Planning Committee, may address Planning Committee during consideration of any application for planning permission. Addresses may be made in person or virtually.
 - There is no separate County Councillor speaking category and County councillors may therefore only address Planning Committee by registering within one of the permitted categories having met the requirements to register.

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2. The following groups may address the meeting, with up to five minutes allocated for each category (NOT each registered speaker):

- Objectors
- Applicant (Agent / Representative) and/or Supporters

Where more than one person has registered to speak in either of the above groups of speakers, the five-minute period shall be shared. In such circumstances, Objectors are encouraged to appoint a spokesperson. If no spokesperson is nominated, Objectors will be heard in the order in which they have registered until the five-minute period has elapsed. The Applicant (or their agent/representative) will speak first in the "Supporter" five-minute period followed by any other supporters until the five-minute period has elapsed.

3. The deadline to register to speak at Planning Committee is 12noon on the working day before the Planning Committee meeting. Requests must be made to the Democratic and Elections Team by email.
 - 3.1 Applications to speak at Planning Committee will only be accepted by persons who have made written representations on an application as part of the consultation process or the applicant or the applicant's agent.
 - 3.2 Persons who have registered to speak may appoint someone to speak on their behalf provided that the person who has registered to speak notifies the Democratic and Elections Team before the Planning Committee commences.
 - 3.3 District councillors wishing to speak on an application not in their ward and/or County Councillors wishing to speak on an application must follow the public speaker process: register to speak as an objector or supporter and must have made written representation on the application during the consultation period.
4. Persons registering to speak must provide the name of the person wishing to speak, a contact telephone number, email address if the person making the request to speak is not the person who will address the meeting, the application they wish to speak on, whether they will be speaking in support or objection to the application, the capacity in which they are registering and whether they will make their address in person or virtually. Persons registering to speak should also confirm if they are willing for the Democratic and Elections Team to share their contact details with other registered speakers so that registered speakers can make arrangements to share the time and/or nominate a spokesperson if necessary.
5. When there is a linked or duplicate application each speaker can only speak on one application site, regardless of the number of applications for that site. For example, in the case of linked applications for planning permission and listed building

consent on the same property, speakers may only speak once.

6. Public speaking at Planning Committee is only permitted on planning applications, not any other report submitted to the Committee.
7. When planning applications are referred to Full Council the normal Council public speaking rules apply, as set out in the Council procedure rules.

Procedure

8. Any requests to speak received after 12noon on the working day before the Planning Committee meeting will not be accepted.
9. Before the planning application report is considered in detail, the Committee may vote to defer the application for a site visit or to obtain further information. In such cases, there will be no public participation on the application until it is reconsidered at a future meeting. Persons who have registered to speak on applications that are deferred to a future Planning Committee meeting are not required to register again.
10. The Planning Officer will present the application to the Committee and inform Members of any late representations or updates.
11. Local District Ward Members, who are not Planning Committee members (or Planning Committee members who have declared an interest in the item and will speak as Ward Member and then leave the meeting for the debate and vote), will then be entitled to speak on the application. The speaking time limit for Local District Ward Members, who are not members of Planning Committee (or who have declared an interest and will speak as Ward Member), is 10 minutes.
12. The persons who have registered to speak will be introduced by the Chair in order of Objectors and Supporters, with the applicant always speaking first is the Supporters allotted time. There is no Committee questions and answer of speakers. Once a speaker has made their statement, they have no further right to address the meeting and must return to the public gallery if attending in person / leave the meeting and resume watching the webcast if attending virtually.
13. Members of the public, Local District Ward Members may not show plans, drawings, video clips, photographs or circulate written material during their address.
14. The Planning Officer will clarify any planning points made by speakers relevant to the application.
15. The Committee will ask Planning Officers any questions of clarification. Committee members may not show plans, drawings, video clips, photographs or circulate written material during the meeting.
16. The Chair will call for a motion to be proposed and seconded. The Committee will debate motion and make a decision on the application.
17. Should the Committee vote to defer the application for a site visit or further

information after the public speaking part of the item has passed, no public speaking will be permitted when the application is brought back to Committee, unless there are significant material changes to the application in the meantime. This will be at the discretion of the Chair.

18. The Chair of the meeting may:
- (a) vary the order of representation if they consider that it is convenient and conducive to the despatch of the business and will not cause prejudice to the parties concerned, or
 - (b) remove any person from the meeting if they behave in a disorderly manner in accordance with Part 4.28 of the Constitution.

9.3 Site Visits

Any Member of Planning Committee may propose a site visit but the reasons relating to the relevant criteria below must be stated and recorded in the minutes, and a majority vote will determine if a site visit is to be undertaken. Members are advised only to vote if they are able to attend the site visit.

Remote tools (drones) are permitted in facilitating site visits but this does not replace the option for physical site visits and any such footage and usage should be approved by Planning Officers to ensure impartiality. The procedure for conducting the site visit will be adapted as required with the footage being shown at the Planning Committee meeting as part of the Planning Officers' presentation as far as practicable.

The rules below should be read in conjunction with the guidance on site visits contained in Part 12 of the Constitution, Planning Code of Conduct.

9.3.1 Formal Site Visits Authorised by Planning Committee

The purpose of a site visit is solely to ascertain the facts relating to the physical nature of the site and its surroundings. The decision to carry out a site visit should normally be based on one or more of the following criteria:-

- Illustrative material is insufficient to convey the issues
- A judgement is required on visual impact
- The setting and surroundings are particularly relevant to the determination or conditions being considered
- It is necessary to experience similar/comparable conditions at another location/site
- The proposal is of particular significance although applications which only raise issues of principle or fundamental planning policies will not normally be appropriate for a formal site visit

- It is appropriate to make an informed assessment of the proposals which are subject to conflicting claims by applicants and objectors which cannot be adequately expressed in writing; or the proposal is particularly contentious.

9.3.2 Before the Site Visit

- Letter sent to applicant/agent and Local District Ward Members) informing of the decision, time, date, purpose and protocol for visit
- Letter sent to third parties where access to their private property may be required. Notification of date, time, purpose and protocol for visit also given

9.3.3 Who May be Present and Take Part in the Proceedings

- All Committee Members or named substitutes who may be nominated to attend the decision-making meeting in that capacity
- Local District Ward Members who do not serve on Planning Committee (subject to the other provisions of this protocol)
- Relevant officers (including representatives of other organisations, for example County Highway Authority or Environment Agency, if necessary)
- A written record of those attending in any of the above capacities should be made by Planning Officers at the time of the visit.
- General onlookers, supporters and objectors will not be allowed to participate.
- The applicant may be present but should not address the Committee other than to respond to factual questions relevant to the site visit put to them at the discretion of the Chair. Any such questions to the applicant will be made through the Chair/Planning Case Officer during the visit.

9.3.4 Conduct of visits

- Visits will be conducted in a formal manner
- The Chair or Vice-Chair will open the meeting and advise Members of the purpose and conduct
- Planning Officers will report any apologies and highlight issues relevant to the site inspection
- Other Members/Officers to ask questions of the Planning Case Officer or on occasion the applicant as to physical characteristics and surroundings
- Chair to close

9.3.5 General matters

- There will be no debate about the merits of the application and no decisions taken
- No formal notes will be made. The Planning Case Officer will update the

Committee on the site visit when it next meets to consider the application

- Where appropriate this protocol may be sent to parish/town councils and applicants for information.

9.3.6 Unaccompanied Site Visits

- Members of Planning Committee have a long-established practice of visiting sites before Committee meetings. Such visits are undertaken individually by Members unaccompanied by Officers.
- The criteria listed above apply equally to this type of site visit.
- The disadvantage is that these visits can be used by applicants, agents and objectors to undertake unwarranted lobbying and where a Member visits private property it can be interpreted as showing favour to the person visited.
- Accordingly, as set out in the Planning Code of Conduct, Members should not enter private land, even if invited to do so, but should view the site only from the public highway.

9.4 Referral of Applications to Council by the Assistant Director Planning

Where a decision of Planning Committee is contrary to both the Planning Officers' recommendation and approved planning policy, the Assistant Director Planning has the right to refer the application to full Council for determination. Before doing so, they will advise Planning Committee of their intention to refer the application to Full Council before the Committee vote on the application.

When an application is to be referred to Full Council, the Assistant Director Planning must arrange to advise, as soon as practicable, the applicant, agent and (where relevant) appropriate third parties of the date and time of the meeting. The Assistant Director Planning should also advise the Assistant Director Law and Governance that an application is to be referred so that all Members of the Council can be similarly informed of the meeting arrangements.

The Minutes of Planning Committee and Council should always include a detailed Minute setting out the reasons why a Planning Officer recommendation was not accepted and a copy should be placed on the planning application file as appropriate.

9.5 Member Call-In

Local District Ward Member 'referral' of Officer delegated cases to Planning Committee shall be accepted in accordance with the following provisions of the Officer Scheme of Delegation, Part 3 of the Constitution.

- The call-in request must be for material planning reasons

- The request must be made within 21 calendar days of the registration of the application as valid (the day after registration to count as day one)
- The request must be made in writing by letter or email
- The request must be sent to the Assistant Director Planning (or the line manager who is responsible for Development Management and reports to the Assistant Director Planning) and the Chair of the Planning Committee
- The request MUST contain all the relevant information.
- On receipt of the call-in request the Assistant Director Planning (or the line manager who reports to the Assistant Director Planning and is responsible for Development Management) will either agree, or refuse, the request in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee (Vice Chair in the Chair's absence). The criteria for deciding whether to allow a call-in request will include, but not be limited to,
 - whether material planning reasons have been supplied,
 - views of parish or town council,
 - level of public interest,
 - scale and type of development,
 - site history,
 - statutory time frame for decision,
 - relevant development plan policies, council guidance and strategies
 - whether the Planning Committee could legitimately reach another conclusion that the one reached by officers and/or the extent to which they are considered to have the potential to "add value" to the final scheme.
- The Councillor called in the application is encouraged to attend or nominate a Councillor to speak on their behalf.