

HAVING YOUR SAY AT TORFAEN COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL'S PLANNING COMMITTEE

Listening to local peoples' views is a vital part of Torfaen County Borough Council's work. The Planning Committee welcomes representations from local people about planning applications being considered by the Committee.

If you would like to object to a planning application and have your say direct to the Planning Committee (which is usually held every third Tuesday at 11.00am in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre, Pontypool), this is what you need to know:

What do I need to do to be entitled to speak?

To be entitled to speak at the Committee you must:

- previously have objected (in writing) to the application, within 21 days of the date of the notice in which the application was publicised;
- give us notice that you wish to speak at the Committee, who you are representing (if anyone), your address, and which application you wish to speak about (and if possible a copy of what you wish to say); and
- give us the above notice at least two clear working days before the meeting (ie by 11am on the Friday before the meeting, if the meeting is on a Tuesday).

How long can I speak for?

At the Committee, each person who wants to speak will be allowed to speak for up to three minutes - unless there are more than three objectors. Unfortunately, if there are a lot of objectors, we need to restrict the speaking arrangements. If there are more than three objectors, they cannot all speak. Instead, they must appoint a spokesperson to speak on their behalf. This person will be able to speak for up to five minutes.

You will therefore need to telephone us before the day of the Committee, to find out how many people wish to speak. If there are more than three, we will make a room available before the Committee so that objectors can meet to elect a spokesperson.

What issues can I raise when I speak?

You should confine your comments at the Committee to the issues addressed in your original letters of objection, or to the matters addressed in the Planning Officer's report. These speaking rights are designed to allow you to explain the importance of your previous written comments more fully.

The Chair of the meeting may stop you speaking if you do not follow this guideline.

Will the meeting be public?

Yes, the Committee meeting will be open to the press and public whilst you are speaking and your name and address and a brief summary of your comments will be included in the minutes, which will be made public.

What rights do planning applicants have?

If we receive notice that objectors wish to speak to the Committee, the Council will endeavour to contact the applicant and his or her agent to inform them, using the contact details in our files. Applicants should ensure that they maintain close contact with the Council planning officers in the few days prior to Committee.

If any objector speaks at Committee, then the applicant and/or his agent will have a right of reply. This means that the applicant and/or his agent will be able to attend the Committee, listen to the objections made and reply to those objections before the Committee decides on the application in question. If no objectors exercise their right to speak at the Committee, then the applicant and/or his agent will not be entitled to speak either.

Once the applicant has exercised any right of reply, the Committee will decide how to proceed. There is no facility for any objectors to speak further.

How will it work at Committee?

The order of business on each planning application will be:

- Planning Officer introduces the application
- The Chair will call upon the objectors to speak (in turn, according to when their notice to speak was received)
- the Chair will call upon the community/town council representatives to speak
- the Chair will call upon the Ward Councillor(s) to speak
- the Chair will give the applicant/agent an opportunity to respond to objections
- Officers will comment on any remarks made if necessary
- Members of the Committee will debate the application, taking on board the comments made and Officer advice, and make a decision.

Exceptions - and Powers of the Chair of the Committee

The rules and procedures set out above relate to the normal course of events and may need to be excepted, where necessary, eg where the Committee decides to visit a site pending its determination of the application or in other exceptional circumstances. Discretion during Committee meetings about the operation of these procedures are the exclusive responsibility of the Chair of the Committee on the advice of the County Borough Solicitor. The Chair's decisions shall be final.

How to Contact Us and Give Notice

If you wish to speak at the Planning Committee, please contact:

Ros Gwynn, Assistant Democratic Services Officer on

tel: 01495 766057

e-mail: Ros.Gwynn@torfaen.gov.uk

or fax: 01495 766059

Alternatively, write to Ros Gwynn at Torfaen County Borough Council, Civic Centre, Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 6YB