

Guide to having a say on planning applications

1. Finding out about planning applications

The council:

- writes directly to residential properties adjoining the site;
- in certain circumstances a site notice is displayed within the vicinity of the application site.

You can view details of all planning applications on the council's website:

<http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/vieworcommentonplanningapplications.cfm>

You can submit any comments you wish to make about an application through the website. Access to this information is also available at the relevant council's main offices.

You normally have 21 days to comment on an application.

2. Ways you can take part

- Speak to the planning officer dealing with the application (this is always recommended and you will find their name with the application).
- Find out whether planning officers will make the decision to approve or refuse (determine) the application using powers delegated to them by councillors, or whether it is to be reported to the Delegation Panel, or to the Development Control Committee for decision.
- Put your comments in writing to the council (preferably by email but can be posted).
- You may also wish to contact your borough/district councillor.
- Details of where to send your comments will be with the application and you will need to refer to the relevant planning application number.

If delegated powers are used by officers or the panel to determine an application (the usual way in which decisions are made), your written comments, along with any others that are submitted will be fully considered in reaching a decision.

If the Development Control Committee will determine the application you can:

- speak to the committee yourself (see below for more details);
- elect a spokes person for your group to speak to the committee;
- ask your borough/district councillor to speak on your behalf.

You can find out who your councillor is on:

[Forest Heath District Councillors](#)
[St Edmundsbury Borough Councillors](#)

If you have sent your comments in writing and the application is going to the Development Control Committee for a decision we will write to tell you the committee's date and invite you to attend and speak at the meeting if you wish.

An agenda which includes the reports written by planning officers on each application to be considered by the Development Control Committee is publicly available five working days before the meeting. This will be available on the website.

[Forest Heath District Council Development Control Committee](#)
[St Edmundsbury Borough Council Development Control Committee](#)

You will need to tell the committee clerk by 12 noon the day before the meeting if you wish to speak.

Forest Heath:

Email: committees@forest-heath.gov.uk

Telephone: 01638 719363 or 01638 719237

St Edmundsbury:

Email: democratic.services@stedsbc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01638 719363 or 01284 757176

3. At the committee meeting

The planning officer gives a short presentation outlining the development proposal, key issues and any updated information.

When called by the chairman, you or your representative will come forward to the committee table to make your statement before returning to the public seating area. Committee members may ask a visiting speaker to clarify an issue after a statement is made.

The Chairman has the discretion to vary procedures as necessary to assist the conduct of the meeting.

Order of speakers at Forest Heath Development Control meetings:

1. a planning officer will provide an update if necessary
2. objector to the application
3. town or parish council if registered to speak and
4. applicant or agent or a speaker for the proposal

Order of speakers at St Edmundsbury Development Control meetings:

1. a planning officer will provide an update if necessary
2. objector to the application
3. supporter of the application (not applicant or agent)
4. town or parish council if registered to speak or other relevant bodies
5. ward member(s) and
6. applicant or agent

The committee will then discuss the application and make a decision.

4. Speaking at the committee

After the planning officer, usually only one person from each of the categories above (2-4 at FHDC and 2-6 at SEBC), is allowed to speak on the application.

At **Forest Heath** if there is more than one person wishing to speak within a category, the committee administrator will refer to the first person registered for the slot to appoint a spokesperson and in the event that no agreement can be reached, the slot will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

At **St Edmundsbury** if more than one person is registered to speak within a category, they will be advised to come to an agreement about sharing the time allocated, three minutes, between themselves. If, however, there are so many persons wishing to speak that the time cannot be reasonably apportioned between them they will be asked to choose a spokesperson amongst themselves to represent their views.

The committee administrator will draw up a programme of speakers and the committee chairman will call the names when it is time to speak. You can speak for up to three minutes, after which you will be asked to stop. Visual material or handouts are not permitted.

5. What you can speak about

You should explain the effect the development would have on you. Your comments should be relevant to planning issues, which could include the following:

- residential amenity
- highway safety and traffic
- noise
- disturbance
- nuisance
- design
- appearance
- layout
- character of the area
- historic buildings
- trees
- planning policy (Local Plan, Structure Plan)
- Government guidance

Committee or delegated decisions cannot take into account non-planning issues such as private property rights, loss of a view, effect on property value, developers' motives, and so on. The wider public interest needs to be taken into account in planning decisions, along with national and local planning policies.

Do not:

- make statements of a personal or slanderous nature which could result in legal action against you
- be abusive
- interrupt other speakers, or the committee debate

The arrangements above for speaking only apply when an application is on the agenda of the Development Control Committee.

The arrangements do not apply to:

- formal consultees, such as Suffolk County Council, English Heritage, the Ramblers Association, and so on
- applications dealt with under delegated powers by the Development Manager or through the Delegation Panel
- legal and enforcement issues
- information, policy and performance reports

You can view the detailed decision notice on the council's website:

<http://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/vieworcommentonplanningapplications.cfm>

6. Committee meeting locations

Forest Heath District Council: Council Chamber
District Offices
College Heath Road
Mildenhall
IP28 7EY

St Edmundsbury Borough Council: Conference Chamber
West Suffolk House
Western Way
Bury St Edmunds
IP33 3YU

Or other suitable locations, where appropriate.

7. Development control contacts

Forest Heath District Council:
Phone: 01638 719480
Email: planning.help@westsuffolk.gov.uk

St Edmundsbury Borough Council:
Phone: 01284 763233
Email: planning.help@westsuffolk.gov.uk