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:
[View or comment on planning applications](#)

You can submit any comments you wish to make about an application through the website.

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 ward councillor(s).
- 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 spokesperson for your group to speak to the committee
- ask your ward councillor to speak on your behalf.

You can find out who your councillor is on the council's website: [Index of councillors](#) page.

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 take part in the meeting.

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 council's website [Development Control Committee](#) page.

The council supports public speaking at Development Control Committees via a number of methods (A – C below)

A.   Individuals can attend the meeting in person and address the Committee directly, **or**

B.   Submit a written time-limited statement which a Democratic Services Officer will read out to the meeting, **or**

C.   A time-limited pre-recorded audio file (in MP3 or .m4a format only) can be submitted which will then be played to the committee under the public speaking part of the meeting

The submitted statement (option B) and pre-recorded file (option C) must be submitted to Democratic Services by 4pm the day before the meeting.

In all cases, registration must be made by 9.00am on the working day before the committee date by telephoning Democratic Services – 01638 719363 or 01284 757176, or by sending an email to democratic.services@westsuffolk.gov.uk.

3. During the committee meeting

The Planning Officer will give a short presentation outlining the development proposal, key issues and any updated information. Then, when asked to by the Chair, you or your representative will make your verbal statement.

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

Order of registered speakers at meetings (three minutes per category) – either attending to verbally address the committee or via submitted written or audio statement:

1.   Objector to the application
2.   Supporter of the application (not applicant or agent)
3.   Town or parish council
4.   Ward member (an adjacent Ward Member may act on behalf of and with the approval of the Ward Member(s)), and
5.   Applicant or agent.

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

4.   Speaking at the committee meeting

If more than one person is registered to speak within a category (1-5 above), 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 Chair will call the names when it is time to speak. Visual material or handouts are not permitted to be circulated by registered speakers.

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)
- 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 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 [Online planning application system](#)

As amended on 2/3/2022