



Having Your Say!

Planning Committee

Revised August 2021

Introduction

The Council has a scheme which allows members of the public and parish and town councils to speak at meetings. The thoughts and views of local residents and business people are very valuable in helping the Council to reach informed decisions.

This leaflet deals specifically with the Planning Committee and how the Council deals with planning applications.

This leaflet explains:

- How a planning application is considered and decided.
- How you can make comments on a planning application.
- How to speak on a specific planning application or another agenda item at a meeting.

If you would like a copy of this document in braille, large print, or if you wish to have it in a language other than English, please email democratic@nfdc.gov.uk or telephone 023 8028 5071.

General Information

Q: What does the Planning Committee do?

A: The Planning Committee has the power to decide a number of issues related to planning control. These include:

- planning applications
- lawful development certificates
- footpath diversion orders
- advertisement consents
- listed building consents
- hazardous substances consents
- enforcement action
- notices requiring the proper maintenance of land
- certificates of appropriate alternative development

Q: What area does the District Council's Planning Committee cover?

A: The District Council is the local planning authority for all of the New Forest District **EXCEPT** the New Forest National Park area. The National Park Authority deal with all planning matters in the New Forest National Park area.

Q: How are planning applications decided?

A: The Council operates an extensive scheme of delegation of powers to the professional officers. This is to make the decision making process as quick and efficient as possible. It means that only a small proportion of planning applications are reported to the Committee for a decision.

When the Council receives a planning application (or indeed any of the other types of development control applications) details of it may be published in the local paper, and it will be available on our website. A letter is sent to all the directly affected neighbours and a notice is put up on the site. The letters, notices and advertisements give a date by which anyone wishing to comment should contact the Council. These comments must always be in writing. Throughout this consultation period, the planning application is available for members of the public to see. If you want to view a current planning application then please visit our website:

<https://newforest.gov.uk/article/1051/View-or-comment-on-a-planning-application>.

Once the consultation period has closed, the application is reviewed to see if the individual Councillors, the town or parish council and the professional officers are all of the same view about the decision which should be made. If any of them disagree, the application is referred to the Planning Committee for the decision to be made. If all agree, and all other criteria are met, then the decision is made by officers under delegated powers.

Q How will I know that a planning application is going to be considered by the Planning Committee?

A: The Public Speaking Organiser will write to everyone who has made a written representation on those planning applications with details of the when the meeting will take place and how to register to speak.

An agenda for the meeting will also be published on the District Council's website 5 clear working days before the meeting. This will provide reports on each of the items and an officer recommendation.

Q: Why are the rules for speaking at the Planning Committee different from those at other meetings?

A: The way in which the Council determines planning applications must, at all times, be fair and balanced, giving all parties an equal opportunity to make representations to the people who take the decision. For this reason, the rules which apply to the public speaking on planning applications must be stricter than those which apply to other issues. The people who may speak are therefore restricted to those who have already written to the Council about the application.

Q: When are the meetings held?

A: Meetings are normally held on the second Wednesday of every month at the Council offices at Appletree Court in Lyndhurst.

Speaking on Agenda Items

Q: Does everyone have the right to speak?

A: For planning applications it is essential that the decision making process remains balanced and fair. Therefore, only those people who have already written to the Council about a planning application will be invited to speak.

Q: Must I always register in advance if I want to speak at a meeting?

A: Yes. We need to know that you would like to speak by 12 noon, two days before the meeting. The practical limit is three speakers from each group of speakers, therefore in order to avoid disappointment it is best to register your wish to speak with the Public Speaking Organiser as soon as possible. Email planningcommitteespeakers@nfdc.gov.uk or telephone 023 8028 5345. If you have not responded by the deadline, unfortunately you will not be able to speak.

Q: What can I do if I am not able to speak?

A: If you were going to make a particular point on an agenda item, there are other ways in which you can get your information to Councillors before the meeting. Firstly, if you know someone else who has successfully booked a slot to speak on that item you can contact them to see if they would be willing to make any additional points that you have. The Public Speaking Organiser will make every attempt to put people in touch with each other, to make sure

that everyone's view can be heard. Alternatively, you can email or write to members of the Planning Committee.

Please remember to allow enough time for the Councillors to receive and read the correspondence before the meeting. It is also helpful if you send a copy of your representation to planningcommitteespeakers@nfdc.gov.uk.

Q: Can I ask someone else, for example a professional planning agent or a friend, to speak on my behalf?

A: Yes. Some people prefer not to speak in public, and we would not want them to be disadvantaged. While you may prefer to be represented by a professional agent, it can be very effective for a group of local residents to nominate a spokesperson. This may be the best way for you to make sure your viewpoint is heard. Alternatively, you can ask for one of the Council's officers to read out a statement that you have prepared, but please make sure that the statement can be read out within your time allocation.

Q: How long can I speak for?

A: For the items on the agenda, the time is divided between three groups. For planning applications these are:

- Applicant / agent / supporters of the application;
- Objectors to the application; and
- Parish/Town Councils

Each of these groups will have up to three minutes. Up to three people can speak for each group, and the time is divided equally between them. The speakers will be the first three people from each group who register to speak. Each group will also have a minute, at the end of the debate by Councillors, to respond to any issues that have been discussed.

Q: How will I know when I should speak?

A: The Chairman will introduce the item and after the planning officer has spoken on the application, the Chairman will invite each person, in turn, to speak and allow an opportunity for the Councillors to ask questions. Please see the order of business at the end of this leaflet.

Q: Is there anything that I can't say?

A: This is your opportunity to emphasise the points that you, and your fellow supporters or objectors, have already made in writing. Please be aware that you will be speaking in public. Meetings of the Planning Committee are audio broadcast on the Council's website and this is available for repeated viewing.

The Chairman is in overall control of the meeting. He/she has the right to decide whether anyone may speak at a meeting. He or she also has the right to say that any question or statement is not appropriate and will not be accepted.

Q: If I will not be speaking at a meeting, can I still attend?

A: Yes. Members of the public are always welcome to attend to listen to the debate on the majority of items that the Council considers. The press and

public are only excluded when the Council must, for reasons which are defined and restricted by law, consider something in private. Members of the public can listen to the meeting on the District Council's website or on YouTube. The link is available on the Council's website with the agenda of the meeting.

Q: Will I be at the meeting a long time?

A: A timetable is worked out to try to minimise the amount of time that people have to spend at the meeting. You will be advised of the earliest time at which your item will be considered. We will not deal with your item before that time. We cannot, however, give any guarantees about how soon the application will be discussed.

Q: Can I bring display materials, such as slides, photographs, or overheads, to help me to make my point.

A: This is not possible. However, you can ask the Planning Officer to display a particular slide during your presentation, if that would help you. The presentations on the applications are published the day before the Planning Committee meeting on the Council's website.

Q: Can I give the Councillors photographs or a written statement during the meeting?

A: No. The Council has to make sure that all parties have an equal right to respond to the points that others may be making, it is not possible to introduce new information at the meeting.

Q: What happens with information about a planning application which is received after the agenda has been published?

A: A summary of any updates is published the day before the meeting. This can be viewed online with the agenda for the Planning Committee. Any information that is received after the publication of the update will be reported orally at the meeting.

Q: Who are the Councillors on the Planning Committee?

A: You can find a list of Councillors and their contact details on the Council's website on the link below:
<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/mgCommitteeMailingList.aspx?ID=504>

Contact Officers for Further Information:

Public Speaking Organiser (To register to speak or to talk about arrangements for public speaking at a Planning Committee meeting)
Email: PlanningCommitteeSpeaker@nfdc.gov.uk / Tel: (023) 8028 5345

Karen Wardle, Committee Administrator (General information about the Planning Committee)
Email: karen.wardle@nfdc.gov.uk / Tel: (023) 8028 5071

PROCEDURE FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON AGENDA ITEMS

1. The Chairman will announce the Agenda item by reading out the application number, the address of the site and a brief description of the proposals.
2. The Chairman will ask the Planning Officer to introduce the item
3. The Planning Officer will introduce the application, drawing attention to the planning issues to be considered and provide any updated information.
4. The Chairman will then invite the public participants to speak (3 minutes maximum for each group of speakers) in the following order:-
 - (a) the applicants/supporters
 - (b) the objectors
 - (c) Parish/Town Councils
5. The Chairman will invite the Local Ward Councillor to speak, if they wish to do so.
6. The Chairman will invite members of the Committee to ask questions of the Planning Officer and / or any of the speakers on the agenda item.
The Chairman may also invite the Planning Officer to respond to any points made.
7. The Planning Committee will debate the application.
8. The Chairman will invite the public participants to sum up and/or reply to the debate in the following order:-
 - (a) the applicants/supporters (1 minute total)
 - (b) the objectors (1 minute total)
 - (c) Parish/Town Councils (1 minute total)
 - (d) Local Ward Councillor (1 minute)
9. The mover and seconder of any motion before the Committee will sum up and/or reply to the debate.
10. The Chairman will take the matter forward to the vote
11. The Committee will either:-
 - (a) approve the application
 - (b) refuse the application
 - (c) authorise the Executive Head of Planning, Regeneration and Economy to approve or refuse the application following a specified time period, specified actions, the completion negotiations, and/or of legal agreements
 - (d) defer the application with reasons for the deferral