Making your case at planning committee

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What is a planning committee ?

There are 25 planning authorities in Wales – 22 unitary councils and three national park authorities. Each has a planning committee which makes decisions on planning applications. This fact sheet explains how to make your case when speaking at planning committee.

Planning committees usually make decisions on larger planning applications or those that cause public concern. Each authority has a 'scheme of delegation' to explain which types of application will be decided by the planning committee. Contact your authority for their scheme of delegation.

Most authorities give people a chance to speak at planning committee meetings, whether in support or against applications.

Getting informed

When you find out about a planning application which you might want to comment on:

1. Find out the details of the planning application online.

2. If necessary, contact the planning officer to clarify any issues.

3. Ask the planning officer when and where the planning committee will be held and for guidance on speaking at the meeting.

4. Also ask which development plan policies apply.

Preparing your comments

You should prepare and submit written comments on the application before trying to speak at planning committee.

Planning Aid Wales has published detailed guidance on preparing comments in *'What to do when faced with a planning application'*. Click here to view it online.

You may want to find out what other local people think and develop your case together.

If you decide to submit a joint letter, include all of the names and addresses of the people taking part and make it clear that it is from more than one person.

If you are working with other people, nominate someone who would be good at speaking at the meeting.

Preparing what you want to say

Once you know the date of the meeting and you have registered to speak, you will need to prepare what you want to say. Remember, you are not expected to be a technical expert. Also, try and focus your comments on the impact the proposed development will have on your community.

When preparing what you want to say:

► Remember you'll only get around three minutes to speak and your time will be strictly limited.

► Summarise your main points. Focus on the issues and be concise. What is your main point ? How will you be affected ? Make it more powerful by using it to end your speech.

► Avoid formalities that will waste time - just explain how you will be affected.

► Stick to the facts, make sure they are relevant to planning and avoid any personal comments or accusations.

► When you have your first draft, read it out loud. Time yourself and keep your points brief.

► Get a copy of the planning committee report - it is usually available three working days before the meeting and will help you make relevant comments.

On the day

► Find out where you are going and arrive in plenty of time.

► Remember the people you are speaking to care about their communities. Follow procedures, speak clearly and stop when your time is up.

► Some of the meetings or comments may be in Welsh. If this is the case, translation facilities will be available. You may be asked to make your comments on a microphone. You should be told how to use it.

The committee will discuss a number of applications at the meeting, which could last for over two hours.

A Chairperson will run the meeting according to an agenda and will invite people to speak. Planning officers will be on hand to provide advice to the committee.

The committee will consider the committee report and any other points that are made at the meeting.

The committee can choose to go against the planning officer's recommendations but must have valid planning reasons for doing so.

Members can ask to defer the application for a site visit or get more information. They will vote on whether to approve or refuse the application.