



GUILDFORD  
BOROUGH

### Guide to Planning Committee meetings



A guide for anyone who would like to:

- **know** how the committee process works;
- **attend** a Planning Committee meeting; or
- **speak** about an application at a Planning Committee meeting.

[www.guildford.gov.uk](http://www.guildford.gov.uk)

## **Introducing this guide**

This guide explains what you need to know if you want to speak at or attend a Planning Committee meeting. You will find this guide useful if you:

- ✦ have applied for planning permission and your application is being considered by the committee;
- ✦ are the neighbour of someone whose planning application is being considered by the committee; or
- ✦ are interested in planning and how the Planning Committee makes decisions.

## ***Attending a Planning Committee meeting***

### **Where do Planning Committee meetings take place?**

Our Planning Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber, which is in the civic suite of Millmead House. The public entrance to the Council Chamber is signposted in the front car park at Millmead House.

### ***Accessibility at Planning Committee Meetings***

Planning Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber which is accessed from the main reception up one flight of stairs. The main reception can be accessed via a disability ramp. The Council Chamber is accessible via a wheelchair accessible lift.

A hearing loop is also installed in the Council Chamber for those who are hard of hearing and use hearing aids. Please note that your hearing aid should be set to 'T'.

### ***How often does the Planning Committee meet?***

Planning Committee meetings normally take place every four weeks. Meetings normally are on Wednesday evenings and start at 7pm. Occasionally, there are special meetings to discuss major or strategic planning applications.

For a list of meeting dates please view our website at the following address:

<https://www.guildford.gov.uk/council>

### ***Who can attend a Planning Committee meeting?***

Any member of the public can attend our Planning Committee meetings and listen to the discussions about items on the public part of the meeting agenda.

In certain situations, you can speak at a committee meeting about a planning application you're interested in. If you would like to speak, you will need to arrange this with us before the meeting.

More information about speaking at Planning Committee meetings is given below.

There may be times when the Planning Committee needs to discuss confidential matters that are not on the public part of the agenda. Where this is necessary, the Chairman

will explain this at the meeting, and you will be asked to leave at the point at which the Committee decides to formally exclude the public from the meeting.

The public seating area is at the back of the Council Chamber, next to the public entrance. A layout plan of the Council Chamber is given on the back page of this guide showing the public seating area and where councillors and officers sit.

### **What does the Planning Committee do?**

Our Planning Committee makes decisions on about 5% of the planning applications we receive. All other applications are decided by the Joint Executive Head of Planning Development under delegated powers.

The Planning Committee will make a decision on applications:

- for all householder and other applications, the trigger for Committee will be receipt of 10 written representations\* or more contrary to the officer's recommendation;
- for all Major and Minor applications, the trigger for Committee will be receipt of 20 written representations or more contrary to the officer's recommendation;
- that are major applications submitted by Guildford Borough Council;
- that a councillor or a council employee has made, or when the applicant is related to a councillor or council employee;
- that the Joint Executive Head of Planning Development asks the Committee to decide; or
- that a councillor asks the Committee to decide for planning reasons.

\* NB a "written representation" is defined as one written representation from an individual or organisation but does not include any subsequent representation(s) from the same individual or organisation in respect of the same planning application.

The agenda contains reports compiled by officers, which will include the recommendation along with any conditions or reasons for refusal. The reports are available for Members of the Committee to review prior to the meeting, along with the relevant plans and other information within the file.

Agendas are published five working days before each meeting. The agenda can be viewed on our website: [Browse meetings - Planning Committee - Guildford Borough Council](https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=130)  
<https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=130>

Officers will carry out a brief presentation for each item, which may include relevant plans of the development and photographs of the site.

### **Who is on the committee?**

The Planning Committee is made up of 15 borough councillors. A number of other councillors are named as substitute members of the Committee.

Contact details of the members of the Planning Committee can be viewed on our website: [Contact details - Planning Committee - Guildford Borough Council](https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/mgCommitteeMailingList.aspx?ID=130)  
<https://democracy.guildford.gov.uk/mgCommitteeMailingList.aspx?ID=130>

## **Webcasting Arrangements**

Planning Committee meetings are recorded for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The whole of the meeting will be recorded, except where there are confidential or exempt items, and the footage will be on the website for six months.

If you have any queries regarding the webcasting of meetings, please contact Committee Services by email on: [committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk)

## **The Public's Responsibilities**

Members of the public must not be violent, abusive or threatening to councillors or officers and must not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, councillors or officers. Subject to available space, the public are entitled to attend public meetings of the Planning Committee but must comply with the ruling of the Chairman. They may not disrupt the meeting or cause undue disturbance, or they may be removed from the meeting. The display of banners or placards is not permitted in the Council Chamber or anywhere on the Council premises.

## **Speaking at Planning Committee meetings**

The diagram on the following page explains the process for deciding whether public speaking will take place on a planning application being presented to the Planning Committee.

We receive, register and start to process a valid planning application.

We generally set a **21-day consultation period** during which anyone can send us written comments about the application.

We decide that the application will go to Planning Committee, and it is put on the next available agenda (see "What does the Planning Committee do?" above for details of which applications go to committee).

**The agenda is published five working days before the date of the meeting.**

<b>Situation A</b> When the agenda is published, we have received 10 or more written representations* for household and other applications or 20 or more written representations for minor and major applications which are contrary to the officer's recommendation.	<b>Situation B</b> When the agenda is published, we have received less than 10 written representations for household and other applications or less than 20 written representations for minor and major applications which are contrary to the officer's recommendation
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**There will be public speaking on the application at Planning Committee.**

A maximum of four speakers can speak on each application – two supporting it and two objecting to it. These four places are allocated on a first come first served basis.

**There will not be public speaking on the application at Planning Committee.**

**Public speaking registration period**

From 12 noon on the day the agenda is published until the deadline of 12 noon on the working day before the day of the meeting, anyone can register to speak about the application. We will write to everyone who has written to us about the application to ask if they would like to register to speak.

If you would like to speak, we must receive your letter or email asking to register by the deadline.

**Petitions**

A petition submitted to us in relation to a particular planning application counts as one written representation. We don't allow members of the public to speak on petitions presented at Planning Committee.

**Writing to us**

We always recommend that you phone us to check that we have received your letter or email about public speaking **before** the deadline. We cannot take responsibility for letters or emails that are sent but do not arrive in time.

We will contact everyone who has written to register to speak to let them know if they will be one of the four public speakers at the committee.

\* NB a "written representation" is defined as one written representation from an individual or organisation but does not include any subsequent representation(s) from the same individual or organisation in respect of the same planning application.

## Registering to speak

If you would like to register to speak on a public speaking item, registration starts at 12 noon on the day the agenda is published, which is five clear working days prior to the meeting. For example, planning committee meetings are normally held on a Wednesday, therefore the agenda is published on the Tuesday the week before. You must write to us or email us by **12 noon on the working day before the day of the meeting**. You must send your email or letter to:

Democratic Services Officer for the Planning Committee  
Guildford Borough Council  
Millmead House  
Millmead  
GUILDFORD  
Surrey GU2 4BB

Email: [committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk)

Tel: 01483 444056

### Your letter or email must contain:

- ✚ Your name
- ✚ Your address
- ✚ Your daytime phone number
- ✚ The planning application number
- ✚ The name of the development
- ✚ Whether you want to speak to support or object to the application

### If I write to you about an application, do I have to speak at a meeting?

No, you don't. If we receive a letter or email from you within the 21-day consultation period for the application, we will include a summary of your comments in the Planning Officer's report.

If we receive your letter or email **after the agenda is published but before noon on the working day before the day of the meeting**, the Democratic Services Officer will include a summary of your comments in a document known as the 'Late Sheet'. This is given to councillors and the public at the meeting.

### How many people can speak about each application?

Up to **four** people can speak about an application.

- ✚ Two speakers who **object** to the application.
- ✚ Two speakers who **support** the application.

As there can be no more than four speakers, we will only invite the first two people who write to us objecting to an application, and the first two people who write to us supporting an application to speak at the meeting.

A person can speak to the committee on behalf of others who support or object to an application. If we have written to tell you that you can speak at a meeting, we may pass your details to others who object to or support the application so that they can contact you. If you would prefer us not to pass your details on to others, please let us know.

### **How long can I speak for?**

Each speaker has three minutes to speak. The Chairman will let you know when your three minutes are almost finished. You must make sure you cover all your points in those three minutes. You cannot ask councillors, officers, or other speakers any questions.

You are not allowed to use any presentation equipment when you speak at the meeting. For example, you cannot give a computer presentation or use an overhead projector or a slide projector.

### **Can I hand out information at the meeting?**

No, you cannot hand out any documents (such as plans and photographs) at the meeting and you cannot display any models. If you wish to send in additional documentation, or information, you must do this in advance of the meeting and by no later than 12 noon on the working day before the meeting. This must be sent, preferably by email, to the Democratic Services Officer: [committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk)

### **If I am speaking at a meeting, when should I arrive?**

You should arrive in the Council Chamber by 6.45pm. The Democratic Services Officer will introduce themselves and note your attendance.

### **What will happen at the meeting?**

- Everyone who attends the meeting will be given a list of people who have registered to speak at the meeting.
- The committee will first consider the applications for which there is public speaking, in the order on the list of speakers.
- When the Chairman announces the name and number of the application you are interested in a planning officer will give a presentation on it.
- The Chairman will call each of the speakers in turn to go to the public speaking desk at the front of the Council Chamber to have their say.
- When you have finished your speech, you will be asked to return to your seat in the public seating area.
- When all the speakers have been heard, the committee will discuss the application. The public cannot take part in the discussion.
- The committee will make a decision on the application.

If you have registered to speak and you arrive late or don't turn up to the meeting, the committee will still make a decision on the application.

### **What happens if the Committee put off making a decision on an application until a future committee meeting?**

The Planning Committee might sometimes decide to put off making a decision on an application. This is known as 'deferring an application'. They will do this if they run out

of time to discuss it fully, if members feel additional information is required, or if they would like to make a formal committee site visit. In most situations, they will not defer an application until all speakers have spoken about it at a meeting.

If the committee defers an application, and there has already been public speaking on this item at a meeting, there will be **no further public speaking** on it when it is discussed again at committee.

### **What issues should I speak about?**

The Planning Committee can only take into consideration 'planning' issues relevant to the proposed development and cannot consider any other matters in its decision making. Therefore, when you are speaking to the Planning Committee you should focus only on Development Plan (local plan and neighbourhood plan) policies and other material planning considerations relevant to the Planning application that is being decided.

### **What are 'material planning considerations' and how are they determined?**

Material considerations are decided by statements of national Government policy or by decisions of the courts. The following are examples of material planning considerations:

- Development Plan (local plan and neighbourhood plan) policies
- National Planning Policy Framework and other Government planning policy
- Overlooking / loss privacy
- Loss of light / overshadowing
- Effect on listed building
- Layout, density
- Design, materials
- Previous decisions/appeals
- Natural environment
- Flood risk
- Parking
- Highway safety
- Traffic
- Noise
- Disabled access

The following are examples of what are **not** material planning considerations:

- House prices and house insurance
- Personal circumstances
- The applicant - characteristics and conduct
- The strength or volume of opposition / objection
- Loss of a *private* view
- Damage to property or Party Wall Act matters
- Loss of trade
- Boundary disputes or covenants

In making its decision the Committee must take into account the officer's report.



The Committee cannot give weight to non-planning consideration in making a planning decision. The weight that should be attached to each material planning consideration in any particular case is for the Committee to determine as decision maker.

At the meeting

1. Please keep your speech to the subject of the application and material planning considerations. The Chairman will stop you speaking if you deviate from planning issues
2. Please do not make statements of a personal or slanderous nature or be abusive
3. During your speech, you are not permitted to refer to the conduct of officers or councillors or to the manner in which an application has been dealt with. The Council has a separate Complaints Procedure in place to deal with these issues
4. You are also not permitted to make personal comments about individual applicants, objectors, supporters or others involved in an application.
5. Do not interrupt other speakers, or the Committee during the debate
6. The Chairman of the Planning Committee has sole discretion on whether a person can speak or not and retains overall responsibility for the smooth running of the meeting. The Chairman's decision on procedural matters is final and must be adhered to.

If you would like more advice on what is a planning issue, please email [planningenquiries@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:planningenquiries@guildford.gov.uk) or phone planning enquiries on 01483 444609.

For more information about committee meetings and speaking at a Planning Committee meeting, please contact the Democratic Services Officer for the Planning Committee, by emailing [committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk), or by phone on 01483 444056.

**The Council Chamber layout for a Planning Committee meeting**

		Senior Solicitor	Democratic Services Officer	Chairman	Planning Development Manager	Planning Officer		
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Public Speaker												NPCMS
Cllr												Cllr
Cllr												Cllr
	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	Cllr	

Cllr: Planning Committee Member  
 NPCMS: Non-Planning Committee member speaker

**Committee Room 1 public seating**  
**Any other councillors who attend the meeting will sit here**

Please contact us to request this document in an alternative format

