

## **Public Speaking at Development Management Committee**

*Welwyn Hatfield Council has introduced a scheme to allow members of the public to speak about planning applications at meetings of the Council's Development Management Committee.*

***Please read this leaflet for information on how the scheme will work and to find out how to have your say at the meetings.***

The Council is the Local Planning Authority for the District. It deals with applications for planning permission, Listed Building and Conservation Area consent.

The public speaking provisions set out in this guide relate to all these forms of applications.

### **Who makes the decision on a planning or associated application?**

The Council deals with about 1,200 planning and associated applications each year. Most decisions on planning applications are made by the Head of Planning under powers delegated to him from the Development Management Committee. In order to avoid delays in making decisions on applications which are neither complex nor contentious, the Council aims to determine about 90% of applications through this delegated process. This figure is the target set by the government which the Council should aim to achieve.

Decisions on the remaining 10% of applications are made by the Councillors who form the Development Management Committee

### **Who decides what is delegated and what is a committee decision?**

The Council has a Constitution in which it is set out which applications should fall within delegated powers and which should be determined by the committee.

In the Constitution it is set out that the Head of Planning can approve or refuse applications under delegated powers as long as:

- The decision accords with relevant District Plan policies
- The application has not been 'called-in' by a Welwyn Hatfield Councillor
- The decision would not conflict with an objection from a Parish or Town Council, or an adjoining Local Authority or a Welwyn Hatfield Councillor
- The Head of Planning does not consider that the application should be dealt with by the committee
- Welwyn Hatfield Council is not the applicant or does not have an interest in the land subject of the application

## Who can speak at Development Management Committee Meetings

A person can address the committee as:-

- The applicant or their agent
- A member of the local Parish Council
- Anyone who has sent in written objections or observations about the application

Only one person in each category may speak. If more than one objector notifies the Committee Section of their wish to speak, then the Council will arrange to put them in touch with the other interested people so that they can agree between them who should speak on behalf of all the objectors.

Any borough councillor who is not a member of the committee may also address the committee.

### How do I arrange to speak?

Please **telephone** the Council's committee section by 5.00pm the day before the meeting to register your wish to speak - telephone no. **01707 357443**

If you register an intention to speak, your name and telephone number will be taken and entered on a list. If more than one person phones to register to speak about the same application, the Committee officers will provide contact details so that they can arrange who will speak at the meeting.

### Where and when are the meetings held?

Development Management Committee meetings are held about every four weeks in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Campus East, Welwyn Garden City.

Forthcoming dates for meetings are (all meetings start at **7.30pm**)

Thursday 16 June 2016

Thursday 21 July 2016

Thursday 18 August 2016

Thursday 15 September 2016

Thursday 13 October 2016

Thursday 10 November 2016

Thursday 6 December 2016

Thursday 5 January 2017

Thursday 2 February 2017

Thursday 2 March 2017

Thursday 30 March 2017

Thursday 27 April 2017

Thursday 25 May 2017

### How long can I speak for?

You will be allowed to speak for three minutes.

We strongly recommend that you prepare your speech in advance so that you are able to make all your points in the time available.

## **What will I be able to speak about?**

Please make sure that your comments are confined to relevant planning issues, which the Committee may take into consideration in reaching its decision, for example:

- Local, regional and national planning policies and guidance
- External design, layout and appearance
- Impact on residential amenity including potential loss of light, overlooking, noise disturbance, smell or nuisance
- Impact on highway safety or traffic

The Development Management Committee is not allowed to take account of matters which are irrelevant to planning such as:

- Loss of property value
- Boundary disputes
- Loss of view over other land
- Matters covered by other laws, e.g. alcohol licences
- The applicant's personality, character or motives

PLEASE NOTE: The Chairman will not allow any comments which are abusive, indecent, discriminatory, frivolous or otherwise unacceptable. Please be aware of the laws of slander. If you say something in public about a person which is not true, you may be sued and have to pay compensation. You need to be very careful about any criticism you make of other people.

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

If you have arranged to speak, you will be met by one of the Council officers who will explain where to sit and where you should go when you are called to speak.

Each application will be introduced and explained to the Committee by the Head of Planning or another Planning officer.

The Chairman will then call on those intending to speak in the following order

1. the applicant or agent
2. Parish Council member
3. the objector
4. a Welwyn Hatfield ward councillor who is not a member of the Development Management Committee

The Committee will then debate the proposal. Members of the Committee will be able to ask questions of the officers for further clarification of any points made in the debate.

Speakers will not be allowed to engage in discussion with members or officers.

## **Will a decision be made at the meeting?**

Most applications are decided at their first hearing by the Committee. However, occasionally, some decisions may be deferred for a site visit by councillors or for more information to be obtained.

If the decision is deferred, you will be able to attend and ask to speak again when the matter is reconsidered at the next committee meeting. You must, however, phone the Council's committee section by 5.00pm the day before the meeting to register that you wish to speak again.

## **Notes**

- speakers will not be allowed to ask questions and Councillors will not be able to ask questions of the speaker
- speakers will not be allowed to circulate any written information or photographs during the meeting. Any documents received by the Council sufficiently in advance will be circulated to members of the Committee before the meeting
- consideration of a planning application will not be delayed because a speaker is not able to attend the meeting or is not present when the item is introduced.
- the Chairman may change the order in which items on the agenda are considered to allow those items where members of the public will be speaking to be taken first

If you require this document in large print or on audio tape, please contact the Committee Section on 01707 357443.