Public Participation at Planning Committees- FAQs

1) **What is a Planning Committee?**
A Planning Committee is a meeting of Wiltshire Councillors to determine planning applications which include those ‘called-in’ by the local Wiltshire Councillor (Division Member). Other items occasionally determined by committees include: Listed Building Consent, Rights of Way applications and Village Green applications. The Committee is a quasi-judicial meeting of the Council and formal in nature, it is conducted in accordance with the standing orders in the Wiltshire Council Constitution.

2) **Why do planning applications reach a Planning Committee?**
Most planning applications are determined by officers, however some applications reach Committee if they are ‘called-in’ by the local division member who feels the application would benefit from debate by the Committee. The Committee will consider the viewpoint of the Division Member, however must also consider planning policies, material planning considerations and public representations received in reaching a decision.

3) **What to expect from the meeting?**

a) **Before the meeting**
Agenda for all Planning Committees are published on the ‘Council and Democracy’ section of the Council’s website, where you can see the officer’s report to Committee. The Planning Officer’s report will contain a recommendation to the Committee, the Committee will consider this and can determine the application contrary to this, however robust planning policy reasons must be given and the decision must still accord with planning policies.

If you would like to speak at the Planning Committee you must register to do so with Democratic Services in advance of the meeting, the procedure on public speaking is detailed below.

Planning Committees are open to the public and you are welcome to simply attend a meeting without notifying the Council in advance, however if you are aware that a large number of residents intend to be at the meeting, it would be helpful to notify the Council in advance so that arrangements can be made as far as possible to accommodate this.

Planning Committees can be lengthy meetings; if you are travelling by car, please ensure you have organised sufficient parking, details of where to find car parks are included in the meeting agenda. If you are attending to listen/speak on one item only, you are welcome to leave the meeting once this item has been heard.

b) **During the meeting**
Usually, the Committee will consider each item on the agenda in turn, occasionally, the order could be varied.

The usual procedure will be:

i) The planning officer will introduce each item and set out any representations, amended plans or material considerations which have been received or come to light in the period between the publication of the agenda and the committee meeting. The planning officer may use a PowerPoint presentation to show plans and photographs of the site in question, this presentation is
Committee Members will then ask the officer to clarify any points/ask technical questions.

Members of the public who wish to make representations opposing the application will then be invited to do so.

Members of the public who wish to make representations in support of the application will then be invited to do so in the order of public/applicant/agent.

Statutory Consultees who wish to make representations will be invited to do so.

The town/city or parish council representative, if present, will then be invited to make representations. Only one representative per parish is permitted.

The unitary division member will be invited to make representations.

The planning officer will then have an opportunity to respond to comments or provide clarification of any points raised.

The Chairman will then normally ask if a member of the Committee is prepared to move the officer recommendation or propose an alternative motion. Once a motion has been seconded it will be open to the councillors to debate it, ask further questions of officers if required and determine the issue.

A motion will be put to the vote, and in most cases the Committee will reach a decision to either refuse, approve, or delegate approval of an application to officers. It is common practice that a Committee may approve a planning application and delegate the finalising of additional conditions to officers. Occasionally, an application may be deferred for a site visit, to enable councillors to visit the site and then reconsider it at a subsequent meeting under the same process as above.

c) After the meeting

If the item has been determined (ie. approved or refused), a decision notice containing the Committee’s decision on the application will be published. If the decision of the Committee was to defer the application, it will return to a future meeting.

The minutes of the Committee meetings will also be published on the Council’s website, these will contain a summary of the debate and the decision reached by the Committee. They do not provide a verbatim account of the meeting.

The decision of a Committee is final and can only be overturned by an Appeal lodged with the Planning Inspectorate (this process is open to the applicant only) or through Judicial Review.

4) How can I participate at the meetings?

If you would like to speak at the Planning Committee you must register to do so with Democratic Services in advance of the meeting, up to 3 people are able to speak in support, and up to 3 people can speak against each application, for up to 3 minutes
each. Statutory Consultees also have up to 3 minutes to make a statement. Parish Councils have 4 minutes to make a statement. Public speaking slots are usually allocated on a ‘first come, first served’ basis, however the Chairman may use his discretion when allocating speakers. If you register to speak and do not arrive 10 minutes before the start of the meeting, your speaking slot may be allocated to another person.

It is important to note that statements from the public are just one of the factors that councillors have to consider when determining planning applications, and they are bound by national and local planning policies.

Once the public participation part of the item is finished, the Committee will go into debate and, at this point, the public is not able to make further statements. The Committee is free to debate planning conditions suggested by public speakers if they feel they have they are appropriate and would meet the ‘six tests’ for planning conditions (ie. they are reasonable and proportionate).

Members of the public will have had the opportunity to make representations on the planning applications and to contact and lobby their local member and any other members of the planning committee prior to the meeting. The lobbying of Councillors once the debate has started at the meeting is not permitted, including the circulation of new information, written or photographic which has not been verified by planning officers.

5) How to make the most out of your public speaking slot:
Read through the Committee papers in advance of the meeting as some of the issues you are interested in may have already been addressed in the report and provide answers to your questions.

Speak to the local division member and parish/town council in advance of the meeting to see what their views are.

Prepare and time a statement in advance to ensure you can cover all of your points; focus your statement on material planning concerns

6) What if I am not able to attend the meeting?
You may ask a friend, relative or colleague who is speaking at the meeting to cover your points, alternatively you can send your views to the local town/parish council and your local Wiltshire Councillor who will consider them.

You may also contact the Committee members to share your views, you can find the membership under the relevant Committee page on the Council and Democracy section of the Wiltshire Council website, where you can also search for members’ contact details. Please note that Councillors are not obligated to read out statements on your behalf at Committee.

7) What happens if there are more than 3 people wanting to speak for/against each application?
In this instance, additional speakers would be put on a ‘reserve’ list in case other speakers drop out, speakers are also encouraged to amalgamate points between them to avoid repetition or to agree a list of three speakers amongst themselves. Alternatively, you may wish to contact the councillors with your points, as detailed under point 6 above.
8) **What other ways can I raise my objections/support an application?**

As detailed under point 6 above, members of the public can contact councillors directly about an application. The details of applications and name of the Planning Officer dealing with the application are on the Council’s website. Any letters of support/objection to an application which were submitted during the consultation period are also published on the Council’s website for the Committee to view.

9) **Public demonstrations:**

Please note that public demonstrations with placards and other demonstrative materials are not permitted inside Council buildings.

Should you require any further information about the Committee meeting please contact Democratic Services:

Northern Area Planning Committee- Libby Johnstone [libby.johnstone@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:libby.johnstone@wiltshire.gov.uk) / 01225 718214

Eastern Area Planning Committee- Kieran Elliott [kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk) / 01225 718504

Southern Area Planning Committee-Lisa Moore [lisa.moore@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.moore@wiltshire.gov.uk) / 01722 434560

Western Area Planning Committee - Jessica Croman [Jessica.croman@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jessica.croman@wiltshire.gov.uk) / 01225 718262

Strategic Planning Committee- Roger Bishton [roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk) / 01225 713035

You may also contact [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk)