

Your Right to Speak at Planning Committee

The right to speak applies equally to all Tunbridge Wells Borough Councillors, applicants and their agents, members of the public including supporters, objectors and also representatives of the Town and Parish Councils within the borough of Tunbridge Wells.

Because the Planning Committee has slightly different rules to other Committees, this leaflet sets out relevant information and limitations relating to speaking at the meeting.



- Whether the appearance and size of a new building or external alterations to an existing building are compatible with its neighbours and the surrounding area.
- Whether adjoining residents will suffer significant overshadowing, overlooking or loss of privacy.
- Whether there will be any significant change in the level of noise and disturbance, for example from the comings and goings of extra traffic.
- Whether new roadways, accesses and parking will be adequate and safe.
- Whether there is any visual effect upon the landscape, eg loss of trees and hedgerows.

Planning issues do not include for example:

- The impact of a proposal on property values.
- Restrictive covenants or deeds.
- Civil matters such as access for maintenance or possible damage to property.
- Competition between traders, eg a loss of trade.
- Loss of view.
- Boundary or other disputes

Law Of Slander

When you speak at a meeting, take care not to breach the law of slander. If you say something in public about a person which is derogatory or defamatory and it is not true, you may be sued and have to pay that person compensation. So please be very careful about any criticism you make about other people. If you have any questions concerning the points raised in this leaflet please contact us at

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If you need this publication in large print or any other format please contact us on 01892 554413.

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The Committee meet every three weeks to determine planning applications and to consider other planning issues. The Committee membership is selected from the elected representatives of the wards shown on the map above. However, Committee members make decisions on behalf of the Council, regardless of the ward they represent.

Making Your Views Known

All comments on planning applications should be made via the planning pages on our website www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk, or by email to planningcomments@midkent.gov.uk, or by letter to Mid Kent Planning Support, Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone ME15 6JQ. Telephone enquiries should be directed to the office in Maidstone on 01622 602736.

Your comments, including any relevant photographs, plans or drawings, should be submitted before the end of the consultation period on an application so that they can be taken into consideration by the planning officer when writing up their recommendation.

If you are interested in a particular application you are advised to register on the website for updates. This will alert you as to when, or if, the application is to be determined at Committee. Please note that how a decision is to be made can change during the assessment of an application.

If you submit comments on an application and the decision is to be made by the Planning Committee, we will notify you of the date, time and location of the meeting. However, no more than five working days notice of the meeting can be given.

Speaking at a Planning Committee Meeting

The Planning Committee meetings follow an agenda that is published at least five working days in advance. Copies of the agendas are available on the Council/Councillors & Meetings area of our website, and at the meetings. You can also obtain a copy of the agenda by telephoning the Democratic Services Officer on Tunbridge Wells 01892 554413, or by email to committee@tunbridgewells.gov.uk. Agendas are also available for inspection at the Gateway, 8 Grosvenor Road in Tunbridge Wells.

You are welcome to attend Planning Committee meetings and subject to the requirements and limitations set out below may put your views to the Committee members in person.

Requirements and Limitations

To exercise your right to speak you must register to do so in advance. The registration process for public speakers will commence at 9am three working days before the meeting (normally a Friday when the Committee is held on a Wednesday) and close no later than 4pm on the working day before the meeting. To register to speak, please contact the Democratic Services Officer in Tunbridge Wells by telephone or email.

To allow Committee business to be dealt with efficiently, time limits on speaking apply. A maximum of four objectors and four supporters may address the Committee for up to three minutes each. We suggest that where there are several speakers with similar views they agree a spokesperson or persons to present all their views. In addition, Borough, Parish or Town Council representatives, who have registered, each have a maximum of three minutes to speak. When a Committee defers a decision the Chairman may allow the speakers to present their views at subsequent meetings.

If speakers want to show visual materials to illustrate your statement at the meeting they should have been submitted as part of an earlier representation. In exceptional circumstances registered speakers may submit additional information for display to support their comments, subject to this being no later than 12 noon on the last working day immediately before the meeting and on the basis that the decision on whether it can be used will lie with the Chairman. The Democratic Services Officer will discuss with you how your visual materials can be displayed.

Meeting Procedure

The time and date of the meetings for the year are available via the Council/Councillors & Meetings area of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website. A list of speakers is usually available at or shortly before the meeting.

At the start of the meeting the Chairman will announce the order of the planning applications to be considered and invite the Planning Officer to introduce the report, site and proposal for each one.

The sequence of speakers registered for each item will be:

- The objectors
- The supporters
- Representatives of the Town or Parish Council
- Borough Councillors who are not Planning Committee Members

After hearing any speakers, the Chairman invites officers to make any points of clarification and allows questions from Committee members to Officers. The Councillors then debate the issues and make a decision. Members of the public cannot speak, ask questions, or make comments in this part of the meeting.

Guidance For Speaking

- Begin by giving your name and address, or if you are representing somebody else, your name, your profession and the name of whom you are representing.
- Try to speak clearly and do not rush your words.
- It is sometimes helpful to prepare a few notes, which can help to order your thoughts at the meeting. Try to be as brief as possible and avoid repeating points. Remember that you only have three minutes to express your views. Stick to the planning issues, which are relevant to the case in point (see the section below).

Valid Planning Issues Only

Please limit your comments to the valid planning issues relevant to the case you are speaking about. Examples include:

- Whether the proposal conflicts with national planning policies or those laid down in the Borough Council's Core Strategy or Local Plan.
- Whether a proposed use is a suitable one for the area.