

Guidance note for members of the public speaking at Planning Committee meetings

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Old Oak & Park Royal Development Corporation (OPDC) Planning Committee is committed to the highest standards in transparent decision-making to provide confidence in its decisions as a planning authority. It has a Planning Code of Practice which applies to all members of the Planning Committee, the principle of which is that its decision-making is open, objective and fair, and is based strictly in accordance with planning principles.

2. Meeting

- 2.1 At the Planning Committee meeting a number of people sit at the main table. These are the Chair and the members of the Planning Committee, OPDC Planning officers who are there to present reports, the Committee Secretary who takes minutes, and the Committee's legal adviser.

3. Public Speaking Process

- 3.1 The OPDC's usual practice will be that objectors and supporters who have written in to comment on a planning application will be contacted by the OPDC no less than five working days before the committee meeting at which the application will be considered to ask whether they wish to speak at the meeting and to give details of how to make such a request. The applicant will be similarly informed and will be asked whether they wish to speak.
- 3.2 Those speaking in favour of, or against, an application will be allowed five minutes. If several objectors wish to speak, they will be encouraged to appoint a spokesperson or split the five minutes between themselves. In order to facilitate this, OPDC will, with their agreement, share contact details with other registered speakers in advance of the meeting, so this can be arranged. Where this is not possible, the committee Chair shall have the discretion to limit the number of speakers and in so doing will seek to give priority to residents living nearest to the application site or representing a group of people. The same process will apply to supporters.
- 3.3 Objectors will be invited to speak first for five minutes, followed by supporters for five minutes, and then the applicant or their representative for five minutes. In respect of both supporters and objectors, the Chair and members of the Planning Committee may ask them questions after they have spoken. Supporters and objectors are not permitted to question members, officers or other speakers and should limit their comments to planning related issues. Speakers should arrive 10 minutes before the meeting and should make themselves known to the Committee Secretary.
- 3.4 Where members of the public have registered to speak in advance of the meeting those planning applications will be taken first.

4. Contacting the Committee Clerk

- 4.1 The Planning Committee normally meets on Wednesday evenings, subject to availability of members and committee rooms. If you wish to speak at the meeting you should contact the Committee Secretary no later than 5.00 p.m. two working days before the date of the Planning Committee meeting. For example, if the committee is on a Thursday, requests to speak must be made by 5.00 p.m. on the preceding Monday (see contact details at the end of this note).
- 4.2 You should provide your contact details, to say whether you wish to speak for or against the recommendation, and to give some idea of what points you wish to cover. The Committee Secretary will, insofar as possible, notify the other parties of your request to speak at the meeting.
- 4.3 There may be circumstances where a speaker, either supporting or objecting, wishes to use visual aids or another type of supplementary information when addressing the Committee. If a registered speaker wishes to use any supplementary information, a copy must be provided to the Committee Secretary no later than 5.00pm the day before the Planning Committee Meeting. This information can be e-mailed or posted but if sent in by post, must be in a format that can be scanned and distributed via e-mail to Committee members prior to the meeting by the Committee Secretary. Any visual aids or supplementary information that has not been provided by this deadline will only be allowed to be presented at the discretion of the Chair.

5. Making the most of speaking time

- 5.1 It is recognised that public speaking can be a daunting experience. Members of the public may find the following tips helpful in preparing to speak at committee:
 - write down what to say and practice how long it takes. At the committee it will normally take slightly longer, so take this into account
 - don't waste time on thanking the committee or introducing speakers and their backgrounds – it will reduce speaking time
 - use the time to focus on those planning issues which might persuade the committee
 - focus on planning issues which the committee can take into account in making their decision. Non-planning issues will not be considered
 - if speaking in support of an application, the committee will find it helpful if you address the concerns of objectors
 - do not feel obliged to use the full amount of time available to you - sometimes the most effective speakers say the least

6. Decision-taking at the Committee

- 6.1 Where items are uncontroversial, the Planning Committee may sometimes make a decision based on the report of the planning officer without extensive presentation and discussion. It is expected that normally planning applications will be determined as follows:

- where members of the public have registered to speak in advance of the meeting these applications will be taken first. The Chair will take other items in the order they appear on the agenda
- the planning officer will present the report
- committee members may ask questions
- the objector(s) to the recommendation speak as detailed above
- the supporter(s) to the recommendation speak as detailed above
- the applicant, or their representative(s), speak as detailed above
- committee members may ask questions of those who have spoken and ask the planning officer to respond
- committee members will discuss and then determine the application or make other such recommendation as is appropriate

6.2 When decisions are taken that are contrary to the planning officer's recommendation, the committee will give indicative reasons for its decision based on planning grounds. The detailed reasons for refusal may be delegated to the Chair for sign-off after the meeting.

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