



## How to Get Involved in Planning Committee Meetings

(Revised August 2019)

# Have your say on planning applications:

Procedure for public speaking at Planning Committee meetings of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council

A guidance leaflet for planning applicants and objectors

# Introduction

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council encourages you to get involved in the planning process at a local level. We believe that there should be more public involvement in determining certain planning applications. The following notes are designed to help you to decide if you are eligible to speak on an application coming before the Planning Committee for determination and if so how to go about it.

## The meetings

The Planning Committee of the Council meets once a month. A full meeting schedule is available on the Council's website at:

[www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](http://www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk). Meetings are held in the Council Chamber, at the Council Offices at Mossley Mill, Carnmoney Road North and will commence at 6.00pm (unless otherwise stated).

The Planning Committee is made up of 12 Councillors from the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council and is responsible for determining about 15% of all applications submitted to the Council. The remainder are decided by Planning Officers through a Scheme of Delegation. A copy of the Scheme is available on our website or a hard copy can be requested from the Planning Administration Team on 0300 123 6677. The applications to be considered are set out in the Agenda which is available beforehand.

## Are you eligible?

You should be one of the following:

- Councillor not on the Planning Committee
- Objectors: an objector against the application or their representative – only those objectors who have made written representations on the application being considered will be permitted to speak at the Committee
- Supporters including Applicants: a supporter of the application including the applicant or their representative/agent

## How do I go about it?

### Which applications go to the Planning Committee?

Normally the larger or more complex applications are reported to the Planning Committee. Should you wish to find out the date of the Planning Committee meeting at which an application is due to be considered please contact the Planning Administration Team on 0300 123 6677.

40 Councillors are elected to represent you and the rest of their constituents on the Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. You may wish to contact your local Councillor to discuss a planning application. However, they may not be one of the 12 Councillors who sit on the Planning Committee. Details of the Councillors that sit on the Planning Committee and also those that sit on the full Council are available at [www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](http://www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk).

If Councillors sit on the Planning Committee, they **will not** be able to commit themselves to a decision before hearing all the evidence at the meeting. This is to avoid them compromising their position, which can result in them not being able to take part in the determination of that application at the meeting. They need to take into account case law, the provisions of the local development plan and other planning guidance, as well as public opinion. Please be aware that Councillors may not agree with your views. They can also attend the meetings and speak for or against an application.

### When can I see the Planning Officer report?

The report is available on the Council's website 3 working days before the Planning Committee meeting. A list of dates is available on the Council website: [www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](http://www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk). Please note that you will only have a short period in which to decide if you want to speak. You do not have to speak at the meetings.

### How can I register my desire to speak?

If you wish to speak you should email or write to the Council's Planning Section: [planning@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk](mailto:planning@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk) by 12.00 (noon), 2 working days before the meeting. You should state whether you are a supporter including the applicant/agent, or an objector. As part of your request to speak you will also need to set out the planning matters which you wish to raise. Any new information you wish to supply at this time will be uploaded onto the NI Planning Portal and drawn to the attention of Members of the Committee. Where appropriate Officers may also prepare an Addendum Report. You may only speak on the item indicated. Late requests to speak at the Planning Committee will **not** be allowed.

## How is the speaking organised?

- A list of persons scheduled to speak, and in which capacity, will be available at least 30 minutes before the meeting starts. Councillors not on the Planning Committee, Objectors and Supporters may speak as follows;
- Councillors may speak for 3 minutes each, up to a maximum of 18 minutes.
- Members of the public (including agents / representatives etc.) may speak for 3 minutes each; two people from those objecting to the proposal and two people in support of the proposal (including the applicant) may speak in that order. Where there is more than two requests to speak, the 6 minutes should be shared between the speakers or they can appoint one representative.

## Where do I go?

Free parking is available at Mossley Mill, Carnmoney Road North with accessible car parking spaces available at the rear and front of the building. The Council Chamber has an induction loop system and a plan of the Chamber is available at the Offices for your information. Please sit in the public area indicated.

## What happens at the meeting?

The order in which the applications are considered is set down in the Agenda. At the Chairperson's discretion, a particular application may be brought forward early, especially if there are many members of the public present for that item. The application will be presented and then you will be invited to speak in the following order:

1. Councillor(s) not on the Planning Committee.
2. Objectors.
3. Supporters, including the Applicant or their Agent.

When you are called you should sit in the public speaking chair provided. Please resume your seat in the public area after you have spoken. Please note the meeting is audio recorded.

## How long can I speak?

As an objector or supporter you may speak for 3 minutes - once the time has elapsed a buzzer will sound. If there is more than 1 speaker in your group i.e. objectors or supporters, you should agree beforehand who will speak and share the time between yourselves. When you have finished speaking Members may ask questions or seek clarification on any of the matters raised.

## Can I use visual aids or hand anything to Members?

**No**, your comments should be made orally. However, at the Chairman's discretion you may approach the screen or other display materials if you wish to point out something of importance, e.g. where you live in relation to the application site.

## What arguments can I use?

Only those relating to planning matters, e.g. appearance of the proposed development, effect on the amenity of the area or your property, access, landscaping, materials, etc. Matters relating to the applicant's personal motives or financial status, views over the site, etc, are not relevant.

You are advised that anything you do say should not contain abusive or defamatory opinions. If you do so you may be asked to leave the meeting. Please do not interrupt or ask questions of other speakers, or make any comments from the public seating area.

## When is the decision made?

A decision is usually made immediately after the discussion by a majority vote of the Planning Committee members. Sometimes a decision will be deferred, for example, to seek information or revised plans. Deferred cases are brought back to a future meeting and if you wish to speak again, or someone else wishes to speak, then you will need to follow the above procedure. Please be aware that the Councillors have to balance different factors and come to an objective decision based on planning considerations. If they refuse an application contrary to the Officer recommendation, they will need to be able to support that decision on appeal should this situation arise.

## Can I appeal against the decision?

Only if you are the applicant.

## What happens once a decision is made?

Persons who have written to the Council will be notified of the outcome in writing. If the application was not determined in the way you would have wished, try to understand how it was looked at by the Council. The Council is committed to best practice and encourages feedback from customers. So even if you don't agree with the decision we made, we hope to convince you of our professionalism and integrity.

## Who do I ask if I have any other questions

Please contact the Planning Administration Team on 0300 123 6677.

