



Boston Borough Council

Municipal Buildings
Boston
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Public Participation at Planning Committee Meetings

Effective from 1st November 2007 – updated December 2025

Introduction

Public speaking will be allowed on any application on the agenda to be considered by the Planning Committee. Public speaking will not be permitted on items within the agenda such as potential enforcement action, tree preservation orders and other policy or appeal notifications.

1. Who Can Speak At A Planning Meeting?

The policy allows public speaking in each of the following categories:

The Objector *(same procedure applies for Supporter(s))**

(A person/person(s) who have applied to speak in line with the procedure in point 5)

The objector(s) will be allowed a maximum of three minutes to make their representation to the Committee. The objector(s) will be timed by the Democratic Services Officer and will be advised when they have thirty seconds remaining to allow them to conclude their representation.

When more than one speaker is to address the Committee within the three-minute allocation period, the Democratic Services Officer will advise the speaker when there are thirty seconds remaining and then advise their time is up at three minutes.

The role of spokesperson for objector(s) on a planning application will be granted to the first person who registers to speak with the Democratic Services Team (see point 5)

However, when more than one person registers to speak the following procedure will apply:

- A contact number supplied by the first registered speaker (a condition agreed to, on the application form, by all people registering to speak), will be passed on to any subsequent speaker, whose responsibility it is to contact the registered speaker.
- The subsequent speaker can request that either:
 - the registered speaker agrees to share the speaking time with them, or that,
 - the registered speaker incorporates the objections of the second speaker within their own.

Should the first registered speaker decline to share the speaking time, they alone will be allowed to speak.

- Where agreement is reached with more than one speaker in a particular category, it is the responsibility of the speakers to divide the allocated three minutes speaking time between the number of speakers.

Notification of the names of each speaker and the order in which they wish to address the committee, should then be forwarded to the Democratic Services Team.

The Supporter

(Other than the applicant/agent)

The same procedures apply as for the objector(s) – please see the previous paragraph*.

The Applicant / Agent

The applicant / agent will automatically be given the allocation of three minutes speaking time. Should the applicant and agent both wish to speak it is their responsibility to divide the allocated time between them and notify the Democratic Services Officer of the order in which they wish to address the meeting. The Democratic Services Officer will advise when there are 30 seconds remaining.

The Parish Councillor or Member of BTAC

Any Parish Councillor or Member of the Boston Town Area Committee (BTAC) may address the Planning Committee in respect of any application within their Parish or within any of the BTAC wards. They may speak either in favour of / or against the application and are subject to a time allocation of three minutes. The Democratic Services Officer will advise when there are 30 seconds remaining.

The Ward Member

A Ward Councillor may address the Committee. They are subject to a time limit of five minutes and must register their intent to speak with the Democratic Services Officer.

Note: The Chairman of the Planning Committee has the discretion to allow an extension to the time allocated to a public speaker.

2. How Much Time Is Allowed?

As stated above, a maximum of three minutes will be allowed in total for objectors, three minutes in total for supporters, three minutes for the applicant/agent and three minutes for the Parish Councillor or Member of BTAC. This time limit applies if only one person is speaking or if there are multiple speakers. Ward Members are subject to a time limit of five minutes.

3. Can Documentation Be Circulated To The Committee?

Yes. Documentation and/or photographic evidence may be submitted. All documentation and / or photographic evidence must be submitted in line with the registration procedure. It must be with the Democratic Services Team by 12 noon 2 clear working days prior to the Meeting. This will allow distribution of all documentation to Members of the Committee before the meeting.

Any documentation and / or photographic evidence received after 12 noon 2 clear working days prior to the Meeting will not be submitted to the committee.

Under NO circumstances will the Chairman permit any new documentation to be circulated / referenced / submitted to Members of the Committee at the meeting. Any documentation referenced by a speaker during their representation, which the committee have not had sight of, will not be admissible for consideration.

4. May I Ask A Question Of The Committee?

No questions may be tabled of the committee or officers.

No open discussion between members and the speaker(s), or requests for a speaker's considered thoughts or ideas on the application is permitted.

Furthermore, no general commenting / thoughts or opinions of the committee on the application should be tabled at this point, as they are for open debate when the Chairman seeks committees' deliberation after all the speakers have made their representation.

The Chairman will ask the speaker(s) to return to their seat in the public gallery, or in the case of the Ward member, the Chairman will ask that they leave the meeting.

The Chairman will then invite the planning officer / legal representative to offer any comment on the representation received should they need to do so.

Finally, the Chairman will then invite the committee to open deliberations on the application for consideration and to make their final determination based on the report and the evidence received.

5. How Do I Register To Speak?

The application is issued from the Planning Department and must be received by the Democratic Service Team, NO LATER than 12 noon on the day before the meeting.

All requests to speak must include a contact number for the person registering.

This is to allow the Democratic Service Officer to contact them and also, in the instance of the first registration received by the Democratic Service Officer, to enable any further person registering in that same category to contact that first registered person, with a view to sharing the speaking time.

However, please note that any speaker wishing to produce substantiating evidence, *MUST* ensure that all documentation / photographs are received by the Democratic Service Team, no later than 12 noon 2 clear working days prior to the meeting. This will enable Committee Members to be presented with the documentation ahead of the meeting and allow them sufficient time to consider the evidence prior to the meeting.

6. What Is The Procedure At The Committee Meeting?

The procedure will be the same for all applications: -

- The Chairman will invite the reporting officer to present the planning application.
- A verbal and visual presentation will be provided.

- The Chairman will then call upon those registered to speak to make their representations in the following order:

Objector(s)
Supporters(s)
Applicant/Agent
Parish Councillor / BTAC representative
Ward Member

- The Planning Officer will comment on any factual matters raised by the speakers.
- The Committee will debate the application and make their decision to agree or refuse the application and, in some cases, may defer the application for further information or for an official site visit to view the application site.

7. What Are Speakers Allowed To Do?

All comments must be restricted to the applications being considered and to Planning Policy, Listed Building and Conservation Area issues, upon which the decision will be made.

It should be remembered that the meetings are held in public session and therefore, no comments of a personal, slanderous, defamatory, or otherwise offensive or abusive nature should be made. Planning committee meetings are live streamed.

The Chairman has the right and the duty, to stop anyone speaking if such comments are raised and the speaker may then forfeit their opportunity to continue to speak. At that point the Chairman may officially direct the committee to ignore the representation received in its final determination.

Contact Details:

For further information in respect of any of the procedures within this policy please contact the Democratic Services Team via demservices@boston.gov.uk.

All applications to speak should be marked for the attention of the Democratic Services Team.

All applications to speak must provide a contact telephone number, provide clarity of the speakers name and be signed and dated.

To email any documentation and / or photographic evidence for the Planning Committee please use the following email address: demservices@boston.gov.uk

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