



*Members of the public are able to speak about planning applications at meetings of the Council's Development Management Committee.*

*If you require this document in large print or on audio tape, please contact Governance Services on 01707 357443 or email [democracy@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@welhat.gov.uk)*

### **Who makes the decision on a planning or associated application?**

The Council deals with about 1,200 planning and associated applications each year. Most decisions are made by the Head of Planning under powers delegated from the Development Management Committee. This avoids delays in making decisions on applications which are neither complex nor contentious. The Council aims to determine about 90% of applications through this delegated process, with decisions on the remaining 10% of applications made by the Councillors who form the Development Management Committee

The Council's Constitution sets out which applications should fall within delegated powers and which should be determined by the committee. The Head of Planning can approve or refuse applications under delegated powers as long as:

- the decision accords with relevant District Plan policies
- the application has not been 'called-in' by a Welwyn Hatfield Councillor
- the decision would not conflict with an objection from a Parish or Town Council, or an adjoining Local Authority or a Welwyn Hatfield Councillor
- the Head of Planning does not consider that the application should be dealt with by the committee
- Welwyn Hatfield Council is not the applicant or does not have an interest in the land subject of the application

### **Who can speak at Development Management Committee Meetings?**

A person can address the committee as:-

- the applicant or their agent
- a member of the local Parish Council
- anyone who has sent in written objections or observations about the application

} Only one person in each category may speak

Any borough councillor who is not a member of the committee may also address the committee.

#### **How do I arrange to speak?**

Please contact the Council's Governance Services team by **5.00pm the day before** the meeting to register your wish to speak.

Email [democracy@welhat.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@welhat.gov.uk)  
Phone **01707 357443**

If you register an intention to speak, your details will be taken and entered on a list. If more than one objector notifies the Governance Services team of their wish to speak, then we will arrange to put them in touch with the other interested people so that they can agree between them who should speak on behalf of all the objectors.

### **Where are the meetings held?**

Meetings are currently being held virtually and are all webcast live and also available to view in archive. You can watch any of our meetings at <https://welhat.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>. Forthcoming dates for meetings are published on our website at <https://welhat.gov.uk/committees/full-list>

## What will happen at the meeting?

While meetings are being held virtually, we strongly recommend that you either submit a video or written statement which will be played/read out at the meeting on your behalf. In this way you will be able to watch the webcast in full while the meeting is happening. We can accept videos in any format; please liaise with our Governance Services team regarding how to send this to us.

Alternatively, you can request to join the virtual meeting to make your statement in person. In this case you will be sent the meeting details on the day of the meeting and when you join you will be held in a virtual "waiting room" until it is your time to speak. You will be asked to ensure you are not watching the webcast of the meeting while held in the waiting room as if this is playing when you are called in to the meeting it will result in a large amount of feedback. **Please note that this option will mean you will not be "in the room" for the meeting proceedings, only for the time you are speaking. As such we recommend you submit a video or statement instead, as you can then watch the entire meeting on our website.**

Each application will be introduced and explained to the Committee by the Head of Planning or another Planning officer. The Chairman will then call on those intending to speak in the following order:

1. the applicant/agent
2. Parish Council member
3. the objector
4. a Welwyn Hatfield ward councillor (who is not a member of the committee)

The Committee will then debate the proposal. Members of the Committee will be able to ask questions of the officers for further clarification of any points made in the debate.

## What rules are there about speaking?

You will have a maximum speaking time of three minutes. We strongly recommend that you prepare your speech in advance so that you are able to make all your points in the time available.

Please make sure that your comments are confined to relevant planning issues, which the Committee may take into consideration in reaching its decision, for example:

- local, regional and national planning policies and guidance
- external design, layout and appearance
- impact on residential amenity including potential loss of light, overlooking, noise disturbance, smell or nuisance
- impact on highway safety or traffic

The Committee is not allowed to take account of matters which are irrelevant to planning such as loss of property value, boundary disputes or loss of view. The Committee can also not consider matters covered by other laws (e.g. alcohol licences) nor can they take into account the applicant's personality, character or motives.

### PLEASE NOTE:

- speakers will not be allowed to engage in discussion with members or officers this includes the asking or receiving of questions
- speakers will not be allowed to circulate any written information or photographs during the meeting. Any documents received by the Council sufficiently in advance will be circulated to members of the Committee before the meeting
- consideration of a planning application will not be delayed because a speaker is not able to attend the meeting or is not present when the item is introduced.
- The Chairman will not allow any comments which are abusive, indecent, discriminatory, frivolous or otherwise unacceptable. Please be aware of the laws of slander. If you say something in public about a person which is not true, you may be sued and have to pay compensation.

**Will a decision be made at the meeting?**

Most applications are decided at their first hearing by the Committee. However, occasionally, some decisions may be deferred for a site visit by councillors or for more information to be obtained.

If the decision is deferred, you will be able to attend and ask to speak again when the matter is reconsidered at the next committee meeting. You must, however, re-register to speak using the same process as outlined above.