

Planning Applicant / Objector / Supporter Meeting Procedure

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Related strategic documents, policies, or procedures:	Planning Permit Determinations Policy, 2024		

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Planning Applicant / Objector / Supporter Meeting Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of the procedure is to define how a Planning Applicant / Objector / Supporter Meeting should occur.

There is no requirement under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 for the Council to hold an Applicant / Objector / Supporter Meeting to provide objectors, supporters and applicants with the opportunity to discuss their submissions with Councillors prior to the matter being decided at a Meeting of Council.

These meetings assist Councillors to be fully informed from both the perspectives of the objector / supporter and also allow for the Applicant to respond to the submissions to assist Councillors in their decision making process.

2. Scope

The scope of this procedure is informed by the Planning Permit Determinations by Council policy adopted by Council on 21 May 2024 which requires planning permit applications to be determined by Council in the following circumstances:

- An application is recommended by Council Officers for refusal.*
- An application has received 10 or more objections that remain unresolved.*
- An application is deemed by Council Officers (Director of Infrastructure and Development and Manager Development Services) to be of high community Interest*

A Planning Applicant / Objector / Supporter meeting will be considered for all planning permit applications that will be tabled at a Meeting of Council.

3. Procedures

The meetings should be informal, in person, with no recordings visual, audio or other permitted. No minutes will be taken nor distributed.

The meeting will be held in Council Chambers at the Civic Centre corner Lyttleton and Lloyd Streets, Castlemaine. On occasion another venue may be required for the meeting, at such time, the alternative venue location will be communicated in the invitation.

The meeting will be facilitated to ensure Councillors have the information they need to make a decision at the subsequent meeting of Council. It is not a mediation session; planning advice will not be provided, and Councillors will not make any determinations at the meeting.

The meeting will include the Councillors of Mount Alexander Shire, the applicant, objectors and supporters who have lodged a submission for a planning application. Council officers will be present to support the meeting as required.

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The Meeting

The Chair will introduce the meeting, explain the purpose and structure and reiterate the 'ground rules', such as no planning advice will be provided, each submitter has three minutes to speak and that the applicant can respond under the time limit of 15 minutes.

The planning matter and Councillors will be introduced.

Objector and Supporter statements

Each objector or supporter will be invited by the Chair to speak in turn and given a timed three minutes to speak to their submission, although no previously submitted submission is to be repeated. Notice will be provided at approximately the two and a half minute mark to alert the speaker to the impending close of their three minutes to ensure consistency and fairness to all speakers.

Councillors will have the opportunity to seek clarification or ask questions of the submitter.

Objectors, supporters, applicant or other members of the gallery are not able to intervene, unless invited to do so by the Chair or a Councillor.

Applicant statement

The Applicant will be provided with a timed 15 minutes to enable a response to the submitters' comments presented at the meeting. The Applicant will be provided notice of when their time is coming to an end. The Applicant is not permitted to provide an overall brief of the planning matter.

Councillors will have the opportunity to seek clarification or ask questions ask clarifying questions of the Applicant.

The Applicant is not permitted to ask questions directly to objectors or supporters, unless invited to do so by the Chair.

Objectors and supporters, or other members of the gallery are not able to intervene, or ask the Applicant questions directly during the meeting, unless invited to do so by the Facilitator or a Councillor.

Meeting close

At the close of the meeting the Chair will thank all parties for their attendance and provide the date for which the matter will be decided at a Council Meeting.

Participant conduct

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Any person in attendance at the meeting who is acting disorderly and preventing the functioning of the meeting may be asked to leave.

All attendees are expected to behave respectfully and in a manner that supports the orderly conduct of the meeting. This includes:

Respectful Behaviour: Treat all participants, Councillors, and staff courteously. Offensive language, personal attacks, or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated.

Follow Meeting Rules: Speak only when invited by the Chair or Facilitator. Do not interrupt other speakers or attempt to dominate discussion.

No Disruptions: Actions that prevent the meeting from functioning effectively—such as shouting, refusing to comply with directions, or creating disturbances—are considered disorderly.

Compliance with Directions: Attendees must follow instructions from the Chair or Facilitator promptly.

Recording Restrictions: No visual, audio, or other recordings are permitted during the meeting.

Consequences: Any person acting disorderly or disregarding these requirements may be asked to leave immediately to maintain the integrity and fairness of the process.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Statutory Planning team to circulate invitations to all submitters to a planning application that is to be decided by Council two weeks prior to the date that a Planning Applicant / Objector / Supporter meeting is due to be held.

These invitations will provide a clear outline of the purpose of the meeting, the structure of the meeting including the time limit imposed on all speakers and provide a date by which the submitter is to respond.

It is the responsibility of the submitter to respond to the invitation to the meeting to advise of whether they are to attend the meeting or not and whether they will be speaking to their submission or not.

If no response to the invitation is received it will be determined that the individual does not wish to attend the meeting relevant to their submission and no time will be allocated.

If a person is unable to attend the meeting and wish to send a proxy on their behalf this will need to be identified at the time of response to the invitation by the required due date.