PROTOCOL ON PUBLIC SPEAKING RIGHTS AT STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD AND PLANNING COMMITTEES

a) The Strategic Planning Board and Planning Committees have to make decisions on the merits of each individual application, upon the basis of what is in the Development Plan and other material considerations. All written representations made to the Council will be taken into account in the Officers’ written report to Committee, but this procedure allows members of the public and Councillors who are not members of the Strategic Planning Board or Committees to attend a Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee meeting and speak for or against an application prior to the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committees making a decision about a planning application or other item on their public agenda.

b) The Strategic Planning Board usually meets at Macclesfield or Crewe at 10.30 am every 4 weeks.

c) The Planning Committees usually meet at the Crewe Municipal Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe, CW1 2BJ (Southern) and at the Macclesfield Town Hall, Market Place, Macclesfield, SK10 1DX (Northern) every 4 weeks.

NB. As both venues and start times of meetings are subject to change, it is important that members of the public check details on the relevant agenda (available a week before the meeting) or contact Democratic Services for confirmation.

d) The agenda for each Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee meeting is available five clear working days before the meeting and is available via the Council’s website. Interested groups and individuals should keep themselves informed about when a planning application will come to the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committees. A list of meetings can be obtained from the Council Offices and officers will be able to advise on the progress of applications.

e) This protocol has been amended in light of the Code of Conduct for Members – 2012

PROCEDURE:

1. WHO CAN SPEAK AND FOR HOW LONG

1.1 The following individuals/groups are eligible to speak

- Objectors
- Applicants or their agents
- Supporters
- The relevant Parish or Town Council
- Ward Members if they are not on the Board/Committee provided that they do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest
• Members who are not on the Board/Committee and are not Ward Members provided that they do not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

[Note: lobby groups shall be included within the time allowed for objectors/supporters to speak.]

1.2 Each person or group identified shall be entitled to speak for a period of up to three minutes (subject to paragraph 2.6) except for representatives of the relevant local parish or town council who may speak for up to five minutes. If there is more than one person wishing to speak from a particular group e.g. objectors, people are encouraged to consult each other and agree how to share their time slot. The Chairman has a general discretion which may be exercised to extend time limits, but this will normally only be exercised in exceptional cases.

1.3 The site plan will be shown and may be referred to throughout the consideration of the application. In order to be fair to all parties, no other presentation aids will be permitted. Similarly, the circulation of information, photographs and/or plans at the meeting will not be allowed.

2 HOW TO SPEAK AT STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD AND PLANNING COMMITTEES

2.1 It is necessary to inform, in writing (email, fax or letter), the Democratic Services Section of an intention to speak at a Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee meeting no later than 12.00 noon the day before the day of the planning meeting. Any emails should be sent to Speakingatplanning@cheshireeast.gov.uk Members should note that they still need to register their intention to speak even if they have called in an application.

2.2 Speakers are advised to arrive for meetings approximately 10-15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting in order to register with the Democratic Services Officer.

2.3 A statement to the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee should only refer to planning issues, for example:

• exterior design, size, appearance, layout, etc
• residential amenity
• highway safety
• character of the area
• trees and historic buildings
• planning policy (Local Plan/Structure Plan)
• Government guidance

2.4 The Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee cannot take into account non-planning issues, for example:
• boundary disputes/property rights
• personal comments about any individual
• loss of property value or loss of view
• matters covered in other laws

2.5 Speakers are reminded of the law relating to slander. If, at the meeting, they say something which is not true about another person, they could be at risk of legal action. Further, Race Relations and Human Rights legislation will not allow any discriminatory comments, for example race, religious beliefs or disability.

2.6 The order of speaking at the meetings of the Strategic Planning Board and Planning Committees is as follows -

• Announcement of the item by the Chairman
• Introduction and description of the application by the Planning Officer, including any update of the Committee report and an oral report of any site visit and highlighting of the key issues
• Ward Councillor(s) (5 mins) (NB. In single Member Wards, the Ward Member may at his or her discretion delegate the right to speak to an alternative Member.)
• Members who are not on the Board/Committee and are also non-Ward Members (3 mins)
• Parish/Town Council representations (5 mins)
• Objectors’ representations (3 mins)
• Supporters’ representations (3 mins)
• Applicants’ representations (3 mins)
• Further comments by Planning Officer
• Ward Councillor if a Member of the Board/Committee
• Board/Committee Members debate and decision taken

2.7 At the Chairman’s discretion, members of the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee may ask, through the Chairman, any of the speakers listed above to clarify an issue of fact after their statement is concluded. Visiting Members, including Ward Councillors, may be questioned for 5 minutes, or longer at the Chairman’s discretion. The Chairman may also ask that questions of fact are answered by any speakers during the Members’ discussion to clarify matters. Speakers will not be permitted to ask questions of the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee or other speakers or to interrupt the Members’ discussion on an individual planning application. The Constitution (Paragraph 58 of the General Procedure Rules) provides Chairmen with powers to ensure good order during meetings.

2.8 In exceptional circumstances, the Chairman may (with the approval of the Board or Committee) extend the speaking period for some or all speakers or allow more speakers if appropriate. This power will be treated with caution for controversial or complex schemes and if additional time is granted to objectors, a similar allowance will be given to supporters and/or the applicant.
2.9 Members who have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in an application must not speak on it and must leave the planning meeting room as soon as the application is introduced. If a member has a non-pecuniary private interest they should declare it and leave the planning meeting room but may exercise public speaking rights before doing so. If a member of the committee has pre-determined an application they may exercise public speaking rights and then, ideally, leave the planning meeting room.

3 AFTER THE DECISION

3.1 Speakers are asked to respect the decision made by the Strategic Planning Board or Planning Committee during the course of the meeting. The Strategic Planning Board’s or Planning Committee’s decision is final, but the applicants do have the right to appeal to the Secretary of State if their application is refused or if conditions are attached which they do not like. Objectors do not have the right to appeal a decision to the Secretary of State but they can seek to have a decision quashed by an application to the High Court by way of judicial review.

3.2 If an application is deferred to a future meeting for consideration, speakers will be required to register to speak for that meeting in accordance with this protocol.

3.3 This scheme will be monitored and reviewed by the Strategic Planning Board annually.