



Planning Committee Site Visit Protocol

March 2010

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Administrative Matters

- 1 A Committee site visit will only take place in accordance with a duly minuted decision of the Committee based on the approved 'Policy for Committee Site Visits'. It should only likely to be necessary if the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualize from the plans and any supporting material, including photographs or there is a good reason why the comments of the applicant and the objectors cannot be expressed adequately in writing, or the proposal is particularly contentious.
- 2 Dates for site visits will be identified promptly by the Director of Law and Governance in consultation with the Corporate Director (Development Services) and the Chairman of the Committee.
- 3 The applicant¹ will be notified in writing of the date of the site visit by the Director of Law and Governance 7 days prior to the site visit taking place and will be invited to attend with an agent if desired.
- 4 The Corporate Director (Development Services) will ensure in liaison with the applicant that access (including for the disabled) is made available to the Committee in order to inspect the site. If there is any constraint on access then a site visit will not be carried out.
- 5 A copy of the Corporate Director (Development Services) report which led to the Committee deciding to undertake a site visit shall be despatched 3 clear days before the meeting to every member of the Planning Committee and the Local Member(s).
- 6 For reasons of health and safety, and security, members of the Planning Committee will notify the Director of Law and Governance in advance of his/her intention to attend the site visit. Members should not seek to gain access to a site independently of the Committee visit.
- 7 The Council will normally only invite the following persons to attend a site visit:
 - (a) The applicant and/or his agent.
 - (b) Officers of the County Council.
 - (c) The Local County Council Member(s)

Members of the public will not be allowed on any site visit.

Notes:

1. In this protocol the term 'applicant' means the relevant applicant(s) for planning permission, the relevant landowner(s), if different, and, where the site visit relates to a matter other than a planning application, it means the person(s) using the land in question and the owner(s) of that land.
2. This protocol was updated and re-published on 15 March 2010 following approval of a report to the March Planning Committee.

Conduct of Site Visits

8. The Chairman of the Planning Committee (or his nominee) will outline the purpose of the site visit which is to inspect land and property which is to be subject to a planning decision.
9. The Corporate Director (Development Services) or his representative will describe the proposal and may refer to matters raised in the Officer Reports by other parties.
10. The Chairman will give the applicant and/or his agent an opportunity to clarify any issues to identify any features on the site which are relevant to the Committee's consideration and to respond to any questions raised by members of the Planning Committee.
11. The Chairman will invite the Local County Council Member(s) present to raise any issues which do not relate to the merits of the case.
12. The applicant and/or agent may not address the Members present about the merits of the case. If any such attempt is made, the Chairman will then warn the applicant and/or agent that Members cannot consider their comments.
13. No decision will be made at a site visit by the Committee and the Chairman will make this clear at the beginning of the visit.
14. A written note of the visit will be made by an officer present placed on the relevant planning application file, and reported to the Committee when they consider the planning issue in due course.
15. Documents, letters or petitions concerning the planning proposal or the site visit from any party will not be accepted at any site visit. Such documents letters or petitions should be sent directly to the Corporate Director (Development Services) and will be referred to in his report(s) to the Committee.
16. Once the site has been inspected the Chairman will formally close the site visit.
17. Once closed no further discussions will take place.

Role of Members

18. The Chairman shall ensure that the Members inspect the site as a group. They must ensure that they see or inspect all relevant matters so they can fully understand the proposals before them.
19. Members travelling independently shall meet at the agreed meeting location and shall not engage in any discussion with the applicant and/or agent until the Chairman/Officers arrive.
20. Members may ask questions, through the Chairman, of the applicant and/or agent on the site.
21. Members should not enter into discussions of the merits of the proposal with the applicant and/or agent or other Councillors during the site visit.
22. Members shall be seen to be perfectly scrupulous and fair to all parties at all site visits.
23. Members should not leave the site visit until the Chairman has indicated the meeting has ended.

Role of the Chairman

24. The Councillor chairing the meeting must ensure the meeting on site is run in a fair and orderly manner.
25. He/she must ensure all questions and comments are made through the Chairman.
26. He/she should be guided by advice from officers present but must ensure the site has been adequately inspected, which may include inspection from third party locations or elsewhere.
27. He/she must formally open and close the site visit and ensure Members are fully aware of matters arising at the visit.



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