

PART 5 – CODES AND PROTOCOLS

MEMBERS PLANNING CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

APPENDIX 3 – SITE VISIT CODE OF PRACTICE

- 1 Sometimes Members of the Planning Committee need to visit a site to help them make a decision on a planning application. These visits are an extension of the Committee Meeting to enable members to make a visual assessment of the site and its surroundings
- 2 When a site visit is required the Development Control Section of Regulatory Services notifies the owner, if access to the premises is necessary
- 3 Site visits are open to all interested parties, including the general public
- 4 The owner or applicant is advised that although he or his agent may be present at the site visit, it is not an opportunity to make representations to Committee Members. This does not prevent the owner, the applicant, or their advisers pointing out factual matters such as the height of the proposed buildings, position of a window, proposed parking spaces etc. This factual information may be brought to the attention of the planning officers who will communicate it to the Planning Committee.
- 5 The Development Control Section will notify those who have also submitted written objections to the application. However, where a petition of objection has been lodged, only one of the petitioners is notified of the site visit. Objectors should be aware that the Council cannot require an owner or applicant to allow objectors onto his land, and that their ability to attend the site visit is at the discretion of the owner or applicant. Objectors are advised that the site visit is not an opportunity to make representations to Committee Members. Factual matters may be pointed out to the planning officer who will communicate it to the Planning Committee.
- 6 Local Ward Members will also be notified of the site visit. Ward Members should be aware that they are also allowed to make representations to Planning Committee Members at the discretion of the Chair during the site visit. If a Ward Member wishes to raise a matter of fact, they should bring it to the attention of the planning officer who will then communicate it to the Planning Committee
- 7 The visit will follow a structured format as follows:-
 - If the applicant, owner or agent (“the applicant”) is present, the Chair and planning officer will introduce themselves and thank them for the right to enter their land, the Chair or officer will remind the people attending the site visit of this Code of Practice
 - The Chair will call the site visit to order and will ask the planning officer in attendance to summarise; the application, site history, features of the site, any other relevant matters

- The officer will also explain to all those attending the site visit that :
 - (a) the purpose of the site visit is to enable the Planning Committee Members to see the site to enable them to consider and determine the planning application;
 - (b) the visit is not the opportunity for interested parties to lobby any Council member to support or oppose the application;
 - (c) if there are matters of fact, that have not been indicated by the planning officer, or if an interested party would like the Members to consider the site from a particular position they should communicate this to the planning officer who will then bring this to the attention of the Planning Committee;
 - (d) interested parties should put any representations in writing to the Development Control Section of Regulatory Services prior to the application being considered at the Planning Committee Meeting;
 - (e) interested parties may discuss the matter with Local Ward Members prior to the Committee Meeting at which the application is to be considered, and be informed that the names, addresses and telephone numbers of Local Ward Members are available.

- At no time during the site visit will the applicant, or any member of the public be allowed to address or question Members of the Planning Committee. Only the Chair or an officer may address the applicant for clarification of matters of fact. Other Members should not address comments to the applicant or other interested parties.

- At no time will Planning Committee Members debate the merit(s) of the application, and no decision will be made.

- No hospitality will be accepted during the course of the site visit.

- The Chair/ officer will close the site visit and if appropriate thank the applicant again for the right to enter the land and for any other assistance.

- No formal notes will be made at the site visit. An officer will orally update Planning Committee at the Committee Meeting on any new findings or further developments when it next meets to consider the application.