

PLANNING COMMITTEE SITE VISIT PROTOCOL:

SCOPE:

- A) The purpose of a site visit is to allow Members of the Planning Committee to view planning application sites, accompanied by a Planning Officer prior to its consideration at a Planning Committee meeting; as decided by the Director of Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee.
- B) Site visits are intended to:
 - a. be fact-finding exercises,
 - b. enable officers to point out relevant features,
 - c. enable questions to be asked on site for clarification,
 - d. enable Members to see plans in the context of the site.
- C) Site visits are not part of the formal consideration of the application and therefore public rights of attendance and speaking do not apply. Attendance by Ward Members is covered by paragraph T) below.
- D) A site visit will only include a visit to the application site. If a visit to an adjacent site is considered necessary, this should be decided prior to a site visit taking place.
- E) Members of the Planning Committee should not enter a site which is subject to a proposal other than as part of an official site visit, even in response to an invitation, as this can lead to the perception that the Councillor is no longer impartial.
- F) If individual Committee Members do wish to visit a planning application site they should only view the site from public vantage points.

PROCEDURE:

PRIOR TO THE SITE VISIT

- G) Site visits should only be necessary where:
 - a. the application cannot be assessed without a site visit and where the required information cannot be provided by plans, images or any supporting information; or
 - b. where the proposal is particularly contentious and where the benefit of a Site Visit is clear and substantial.
- H) Planning Officers will identify those applications where a Committee Site Visit is considered necessary. In addition, any request for a site visit by a Ward Member must be made in writing to the Director of Inclusive Growth during the public consultation period. The Member must state the reason(s) for the request. The requests for a Site Visit will be decided by the Director of Inclusive Growth, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee. The requests and the Director's decision will be reported to the Planning Committee.
- I) The time and date of the Site Visit will take place prior to the Planning Committee meeting where the application is to be considered and will be agreed by the Chair of the Planning Committee.

- J) The applicant's agent/or applicant where there is no agent ("the applicant") will be notified of the date and time of the site visit and asked to arrange access. The applicant will be informed that the Protocol is available to view on the web site.
- K) The Planning Committee Members and relevant Ward Member(s) will be notified of the date and time of the site visit at least three clear days before the visit is due to take place.

2 THE SITE VISIT:

- L) If the Applicant is present, the Chair or Member nominated by the Chair in advance ("the Chair") and officer will introduce themselves. The Chair will remind the applicant that the site visit will be conducted in accordance with this protocol.
- M) The Chair will call the site visit to order and will ask the planning officer in attendance to summarise:
 - a. the application
 - b. any relevant site history
 - c. the features of the site
 - d. any other matters the officer considers should be pointed out.
- N) The Planning Officer may ask the applicant to point out particular features within or adjacent to the site, or to explain aspects of the proposals, but only as an aid to the explanation. There will be no discussion of the merits of the case.
- O) Planning Committee Members may seek clarification from the Planning Officer on matters relevant to the site visit. Any comments shall be restricted to facts, not opinions.
- P) Ward Member(s) may attend the site visit to observe and, only at the request of the Chair, may clarify factual matters.
- Q) Planning Committee Members and Officers should not enter into a debate on the merits of the application or on possible amendments to the proposals with either the applicant or with any third party who is observing the site visit – for example, a Ward Member or local resident. If approached Planning Committee Members should direct people to the Officer and/or suggest they write to the Council. If Planning Committee Members have any concerns or suggestions about the proposals the appropriate forum for these concerns is the subsequent Committee meeting and not the site visit.
- R) Planning Committee Members may, of course, express concerns to the attending Planning Officer, but such concerns would only be informal in nature and should not be discussed on site with the applicant or any third party. Any comments are restricted to facts, not opinions.
- S) At no time will the applicant, Ward Member or local resident be permitted to address or question Members of the Committee.
- T) Members should remain in one group for the duration of the site visit.
- U) The Chairman will close the Site Visit.