

Site Visit Protocol - April 2019

Purpose:

The purpose of site visits is to enable Members to view any particular aspect of an application in context where it is unclear from public viewpoints or from the submitted drawings. They will be the exception. No decision is reached on site, and there is no debate.

Attendees:

All Planning Committee Members and the relevant Council Officers who may be called upon to answer specific factual questions. This will normally include the case officer and other specialists such as a Highway Engineer or Tree Officer as and when required. No third parties may accompany the site visit party, unless the Chairman believes there are clear material planning reasons for allowing them to attend. If third parties are invited to attend, they are not permitted to address, or ask questions / make representations, to any Officer or Member. For avoidance of doubt, they are there as observers only.

The names of all those persons attending the visit will be recorded.

When requested, the applicant will be expected to peg out the corners of any proposed building, and where practical, demonstrate the height.

To request a site visit:

Requested by the Planning Committee responsible for determining the application (i.e. matter deferred at Planning Committee for a site visit - reasons for visit recorded in the minutes along with specific viewpoints they wish to assess the proposals from). A site visit can also be arranged at the discretion of the Nominated Officer, in advance of a Planning Committee meeting, after the Nominated Officer has discussed the reasons and agrees one is necessary with the Chairman of the appropriate committee. These reasons should be recorded.

Failure by a member to attend the site visit.

Given the exceptional nature of site visits being required by a Planning Committee, if a Planning Committee Member does not attend any formal site visit for whatever reason, then s/he should only take part in the debate and vote on the agenda item, if s/he is satisfied that s/he has sufficient relevant knowledge of the site. For reasons of transparency s/he should explain to the Planning Committee why s/he is in a position to understand the issues before the Committee without the benefit of attending the site visit.

Timing of site visits:

Normal office hours, usually (but not exclusively) the same day as the Planning Committee.

Procedure on site:

1. The site visit will normally be chaired by the Chairman (or in her/his absence the Vice Chairman) who will formally open the site visit with introductions and reinforce the purpose of site visits. S/he will then invite the Planning Officer to describe the application.
2. The Planning Officer then describes the proposal and relevant site specific considerations, and guides the Members to appropriate vantage points which may be within and /or outside the site.
3. The Chairman will invite questions from Members to seek clarification but not opinion from the Planning Officer and other Officers.
4. The Chairman formally closes the meeting.

Other

By exception, the person presiding at the meeting of the Planning Committee / site visit, has the discretion to vary the above protocol either before, during the visit or at any subsequent Committee meeting, after first consulting with the Nominated Officer. The reasons for the variation must be recorded.

May 2019