

CONSTITUTION PRACTICE NOTE

PLANNING COMMITTEE SITE VISITS

Purpose

The Planning Code of Good Practice sets out when it is appropriate for the Planning Committee to make a site visit in connection with a planning application. The purpose of this Practice Note is to set out the approach to those site visits.

Councils are advised to have a clear and consistent approach on when and why to hold a site visit and how to conduct it. This helps to avoid accusations that visits are arbitrary, unfair or a covert lobbying device. The Committee should be aware that site visits can cause delay and additional costs, for both the Developer and the Council, and should only be used where there are good reasons.

All Members of the Committee should endeavour to attend site visits to ensure they are fully apprised of all the relevant information prior to making a decision on the application. It is not normally acceptable for a Member to visit the site alone as they are only entitled to view the site from public vantage points and have no individual rights to enter private property.

When the application is taken back to Committee after the site visit only Members of the Committee who attended at the Committee Meeting when the site visit was agreed and who attended the arranged site visit are eligible to decide the application. This is because the information gained from visit forms part of relevant material that is required to make an informed decision on the application. If a Member who has not attended the site visit wishes to vote they should state the reason why they have not attended the arranged site visit and confirm that they have all the facts required to make an informed decision

Organisation

1. All Members of the Planning Committee and the Ward Members shall be invited to the site visit.
2. The time and date of the site visit will be agreed with the chair and notified to the relevant persons and parties by the Democratic Services Officer.
3. The Director of Sustainable Communities should obtain the consent of the landowner before the site visit is carried out.
4. If the Applicant, Agent or other third party (including a statutory consultee) are present for the site visit they must stand apart from the Committee. The attending planning officer will explain that they are permitted to point out certain features of the land that they consider relevant but must not make any comments about the application itself.
5. There shall be no discussion during the site visit regarding the merits of the proposed development and decisions on the relevant planning application,

unless specifically requested by the Committee Chairman in order to answer questions of fact.

6. No lobbying of Members of the Committee will be allowed.