

APPENDIX "D"



Planning Committee

Site Inspections - Procedure

BACKGROUND

In considering applications, the Council acts in a quasi-judicial capacity. It is a matter of law that it must act fairly throughout the determination process and observe the rules of natural justice. In recognition of this, the following procedure has been put in place to ensure that site inspections are conducted consistently and fairly and that all those who have an interest in an application are aware of the manner in which a site inspection will be undertaken.

PURPOSE OF SITE INSPECTION

The purpose of a site inspection is to provide Members of the Planning Committee with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the relevant features of a site and its surroundings.

FORM OF SITE INSPECTION

A site inspection is not a formal meeting of the Planning Committee. It is an informal arrangement to provide Members with information to enable a decision to be made at a subsequent Planning Committee in the light of all relevant information available.

DECISION TO HOLD A SITE INSPECTION

A site inspection will be undertaken when the Planning Committee consider that it is essential to view a site, and, its surroundings in order to obtain a full understanding of an issue relevant to the determination of an application that could not otherwise be considered adequately. A request for a site inspection from an interested party, supporter or objector will not oblige the Planning Committee to hold an inspection.

The Chair of the Committee can agree to hold a site inspection before an application is considered at Committee, if the Chair is in agreement with the Head of Planning that there has been significant public interest in the application and the Committee would benefit from visiting the site.

ATTENDANCE AT SITE INSPECTIONS

Officers will obtain the agreement of the applicant/landowner for a site inspection to take place on his land, where access is required.

Members of the Planning Committee will be present and relevant Officers of the District Council will attend.

Ward Councillor(s) for the Ward in which the applicant site is located will be informed of the inspection and will be permitted to attend as an observer, answer questions and suggest viewing the sites from other locations (which if required they will have already gained permission to access other people's property), if they wish to. If the Ward Councillor(s) are unable to attend, then they can arrange a Parish or Town Council representative to attend on their behalf and notify the Head of Planning and Assistant Chief Executive (Members' Services) of who is attending on their behalf.

The applicant or their agent will be invited to attend the site inspection but this will only be to answer questions where the Planning Committee require clarification.

Objectors/supporters/amenity group representatives will not be invited to site inspection.

Site inspection arrangements will be confirmed in writing to applicants/agents, members of the Council's Planning Committee and Ward Councillors.

PROCEDURE ON SITE

The following procedural rules will be observed at all site inspections:-

- (a) The Chair will control proceedings throughout.
- (b) The Chair will explain that the purpose of the site inspection is to obtain information relevant to the determination of the application and will summarise the proceedings and constraints as set out below.
- (c) The Chair will introduce the representative of the Planning Department who will describe the proposal with reference to features on the ground, the submitted plans, summarise the relevant issues and material considerations.
- (d) Other Officers may be present to provide other relevant specialist information where required e.g. Highways and Environmental Health.
- (e) The Officers will provide clarification on matters relating to the proposal in response to questions from Members of the Planning Committee. The applicant/agent may be asked by the Chair to provide clarification on any details that are unclear.
- (f) During the site inspection, no separate discussions must take place between Officers or Councillors and applicants.
- (g) No hospitality will be accepted from the applicant or any other party present at the site inspection.
- (h) Councillors may visit an adjoining site to view the impact of the development on an affected property, where a prior request has been made for such a visit and Councillors consider it essential to make such a visit in order to properly determine the application. Such a visit will be subject to all the other provisions set out in this procedure. Requests to visit adjoining affected properties made on the day of the site visit will be at the discretion of the Chair.
- (i) The Chair will conclude the site visit. No indication of the views of Councillors or the likely outcome of the Planning Committee deliberations on the application will be given. If Councillors require further information or clarification of any aspect of the development, the Officer attending the visit will be asked to ensure that such information is available by the time of the subsequent Planning Committee meeting.
- (j) No handouts will be accepted from the applicant or any other party present at the site inspection.