

14. Protocol for Planning Committee Site Inspections

Background

This protocol establishes procedures for the organisation of Planning Committee site inspections that take place prior to the committee meeting.

General Principles

A site inspection plays an invaluable role in the determination of more complex or controversial planning applications. Site inspections allow committee members to better understand the context and content of the previously published committee report. They also provide members with the opportunity to view particular aspects of a site, the proposal, or the wider local environment raised by officers, the applicant or objectors.

Committee members should under no circumstances make decisions on applications during the site inspection.

Members should debate the proposal at the committee meeting and take into account both the appropriate policies in the adopted plan and all other material planning considerations (both those identified on site and others that may not have been considered on the site inspection).

Planning officers will arrange the itinerary and make the appropriate arrangements for the committee members to gain access to sites or to address the committee before, during or after the inspection. A planning officer will also attend all site inspections.

The site inspection is not open to the general public for reasons of probity, possible health and safety issues, as well as entry onto private land or premises.

Procedures at Site Inspections

The Planning Committee site inspection provides an opportunity for committee members (including, where appropriate, the local councillor) to be briefed by planning officers on or around the application site. Neither members of the public (including supporters/objectors/ parish members) nor the applicant or the applicant's agents are permitted to participate in the site inspection.

Committee members (including where appropriate the local councillor) will:

- (a) not debate the planning application with either members of the public or the applicant during the site inspection
- (b) not debate the planning application with either members of the public or the applicant in the period between the termination of the site inspection and the commencement of the Planning Committee meeting
- (c) receive a group presentation from an appropriate planning officer at the outset of the site inspection
- (d) be shown, key elements of both the site and its wider environment (as appropriate) by an appropriate planning officer. Should committee members wish to visit additional parts of the site or the wider environment than those the officer has drawn their attention to, they should advise the planning officer before the committee leaves the site and the officer will, where there are no reasons for not visiting, ensure that these locations are inspected
- (e) ask the appropriate planning officer to clarify any matters of detail at the end of the group presentation

(f) remain as a single group throughout the full course of the site inspection