

Planning Applications Site Visit Procedure

When a Planning Applications Committee (PAC) or the Planning Environment and Development Committee (PED) or the Council agree that a site visit is appropriate prior to determining a planning application, these procedures shall be followed:

1. The **Planning & Development Service** will write out to parties (applicant, consultees and those parties lodging representations in support of/in objection to the application) advising that an accompanied site visit will take place and inviting parties to attend. The letter will identify an unambiguous meeting point and indicate the time when parties are to meet. If known, the date, time and place of the meeting at which the planning application will be determined will be included in this letter.
2. If the PAC/PED/Council has any requirements related to the site visit (e.g. that the footprint of a proposed building be pegged out), these requirements must be intimated to the applicant in advance of the site visit.
3. In some cases a bus will be arranged in order that the PAC/PED/Council members can arrive at the site together. Travel arrangements will be intimated by **Democratic Services** to PAC/PED/Council members in advance of the site visit. In cases where a bus is arranged for members, any spare seats on the bus may accommodate representatives of the applicant/consultees/supporters/objectors. If there are insufficient seats for at least one representative of each of the abovementioned groups to travel by bus, only PAC/PED/Council members will travel by bus and those wishing to attend the site visit may follow the bus using their own transport. If this happens, in the interests of transparency and openness, the planning application will not be discussed on the bus. Instead, the application will be discussed once the PAC/PED/Council members reach the site and disembark.
4. **Members** of the PAC/PED/Council shall arrive at the meeting point at or just before the appointed time. **Members** of the PAC/PED/Council must not enter into discussion with any party already on site (other than introductions) to avoid the perception of support for one party over another. If one or more of the expected participants is not present on time, any delay to the start of the site visit will be at the **Chair's** discretion.
5. The site visit will start at the appointed time (with the exception of the circumstances referred to above). The **Clerk** will note the names of those members of the PAC/PED/Council present at the site visit as only those members will be able to take part in the determination of the planning application. The **Chair** will introduce him/herself and ask the PAC/PED/Council members to introduce themselves to those parties present. **Officers** and **parties present** will also introduce themselves. The **Chair** will indicate to those present the purpose of the site visit (namely, to point out the location of the proposed development and physical features referred to in either the planning application or in representations lodged in support of/in opposition to the application). The **Chair** will remind those present that the site visit is not an opportunity for parties to engage in discussion about the merits of the application. The **Chair** will ask the **Planning Officer** to introduce the application to members of the PAC/PED/Council and answer any questions they may have (NB this is not an opportunity for members to discuss the merits or otherwise of the planning application). The **Chair** will then ask the applicant (or applicant's agent) and those supporters/objectors present whether they wish to point out any physical features not already covered by the Planning Officer in his/her presentation. The **Chair** will officiate at the site visit and officers present will assist in this process.

6. Those in attendance are entitled to accompany the PAC/PED/Council as the site visit takes place. When pointing out the location of the proposed development/physical features on site, **participants** must address the PAC/PED/Council as a group (not as individual members) through the Chair. **Members** of the PAC/PED are not permitted to engage in any discussion on the merits of the case with any person approaching them.

7. If any participant (applicant, consultee, objector or supporter) arrives very late, but before the PAC/PED leaves the site, the **Chair** will explain, in the presence of the other parties, what the PAC/PED has done and where the PAC/PED has been. The participant will be asked if there is anything (not already seen) that he/she wishes to point out.

8. If any PAC/PED/Council member arrives late, the Chair/Convener will decide whether the site visit can be recommenced and the information presented repeated for the benefit of that member. If the Chair/Convener decides that this is not feasible, or that there is insufficient time available, to recommence the site visit, the member who has arrived late at the site visit will be excluded from participation in the subsequent determination of the planning application.

9. On conclusion of the site visit, the **Chair** will thank everyone for their attendance and advise parties of the place/time of the meeting when the PAC/PED/Council will determine the application (if known) or will indicate that these details will be sent to parties (if not yet known). The **Chair** will then indicate that the site visit has concluded.

Legal Service/Planning and Development Service
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