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# Protocol for Planning Site Visits

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These notes are intended to clarify, and in no way replace the Standing Orders and other guides.

## PLANNING SITE VISITS

This protocol is designed to cover council organized formal planning site visits. Councillors who make individual ad hoc site visits are not representing the council, although the code of conduct still applies.

## REASONS FOR SITE VISITS

Not every planning issue will require a site visit. Councillors will have familiarized themselves with the proposals and will have determined the need which may be for a number of reasons including:

1. Further familiarization of the site before formal response to planning consultation by the Local Planning Authority
2. Fact-finding, for instance in the case of an alleged breach of development control
3. Gaining further local knowledge in developing a policy statement

## PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

1. Once a site visit has been agreed, no discussion should take place until the results are reported back to council/committee
2. The arrangements will be made by the Clerk
3. The Clerk will need to seek the permission of the landowner to enter onto privately owned land if this is felt necessary, but the landowner is not obliged to give consent

## PROCEDURE

1. The Clerk, in consultation with the committee chairman, will determine the need for a site visit, and the names of those councillors to attend will have been determined by the committee. Councillors will be notified by the Clerk of the time and place of the site visit, and it is recommended that the Clerk is present.
2. The Code of Conduct applies: Interests should be declared and councillors should not attend if they have a prejudicial interest
3. The applicant and/or landowner may be present if the site visit takes place on-site rather than adjacent to the site
4. The chairman of the council or committee chairman should ensure that the site visit is properly carried out, taking advice from the Clerk. There must be no debate, representations from groups or individuals, or decision at the site visit; these issues are reserved for the council/committee meeting.
5. Councillors should not address anybody other than each other and the Clerk. Councillors may pose questions and ask the Clerk to take notes on the issues raised and the information gained on site. All points should be **objective, relevant and material**.

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6. When the chairman deems the site visit closed, all councilors and Clerk will leave.

## REPORTING BACK

1. The site visit will be reported to the relevant committee or council by the Clerk who will have notices prepared, to be read out or circulated
2. The Clerk will report on any information-gathering as a result of questions raised at the site visit, together with other information relevant to the planning item such as the planning history
3. The council/committee will take the report into account when coming to its decision