

CODE OF PRACTICE – SITE VISITS BY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES

1. Decision to visit site

In deciding whether to visit a site, the Committee will seek to act in a consistent manner in all cases, being guided by the following principles:-

- a) The site or its immediate surroundings have particular physical characteristics or the development involves technical issues where inadequate or only recently issued guidance is available which are likely to have a critical bearing on the decision which has to be made.
- b) The proposal has proved to be a source of such local or Highway Authority concern that it is considered that a better-informed decision is likely to be made, as a result of both seeing the physical characteristics of the site and hearing local views expressed through the Town or Parish Council's representative.

2. Conduct of site visits

The Member chairing the visit will generally follow the procedure set out below:-

- a. Chairman to open visit, explaining if necessary to members of the public the fact-finding nature of the visit, that they are welcome to listen to the discussion but that they are not entitled to speak and explaining to the applicant and/or agent that they may be asked to clarify points of detail at the Chairman's invitation only, but that they or any other third party will **not** be permitted to make representations.
- b. Planning Officer to give brief introduction to case, setting out background to the application and the principal issues involved, including any significant characteristics of the site or its surroundings. If appropriate, Highway Authority representative or other specialist officer be invited to speak.
- c. If present, Local Member(s) be invited to give observations.
- d. Members of Committee be invited to make observations or ask questions concerning the proposal.
- e. Only if appropriate, and strictly at the Chairman's discretion, applicant or agent be invited to answer specific questions or clarify points raised by previous speakers, such answers to be directed to the Chairman only.
- f. Planning Officer be invited, if necessary, to clarify any outstanding issues.
- g. Chairman to close meeting, explaining, if necessary, procedure for further representations to be made by the applicant, agent or the public and when the matter is likely to be considered.

Guidance Notes:

- (i) *If a Member is aware that he or she will be unable to attend the next meeting of the Committee, he or she may arrange for a substitute member to attend both any Site Meeting and the next meeting of the Committee.*

- (ii) *A member of the Committee or any declared substitute Member who has not attended a Site Meeting is entitled to attend and participate fully in any committee meeting when the site is further considered. In such circumstances, the Members should try to acquaint him or herself with the site. This could be done either by a visit (subject to access being possible from the highway or public land or with the agreement of the landowner) or by discussing the matter with a Planning Officer or other Member who did attend.*