



HEATHFIELD & WALDRON
PARISH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATION SITE
VISIT POLICY

L Hurst

March 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

This Guidance is for the information of all Planning Committee Members undertaking a formal, organised visit to the site of any planning application. This visit would be organised by the Parish Council office through the applicant's agent or the applicant themselves. The purpose of the guidance is to provide information as to the best practice about how to conduct themselves in a professional manner and to ensure that any actions do not lead to a perception of predetermination. The test for apparent predetermination is whether someone else (e.g. the public, objector or applicant) might perceive that an action (word or deed) might have predetermined the Committee's decision. (This policy does not relate to where a Planning Committee member is making themselves familiar with the site from outside its curtilage and without interaction with the applicant, their agent or neighbours and without expressing a prejudicial view).

2. GUIDANCE

A) Any visit to the site of a planning application shall be formally arranged through the Assistant Parish Clerk. This ensures that there is a record of all site visits.

B) The site visit shall be a single visit and shall not comprise of multiple visits with different Members attending. Ideally all Members of the Planning Committee should be present at the single visit. However, in any event the visit shall comprise of two or more Members of the Planning Committee. This will ensure that all those Members attending will have seen and heard the same information.

C) The visit is a private visit comprising of Members of the Planning Committee and representatives of the applicant and / or the developer. No other person (e.g. member of the parish, an objector, other interested party, etc.) shall be a part of the visiting party.

D) All members attending the site visit shall be briefed about the purpose of the visit, any unusual arrangements, any requirements to wear personal protection equipment (e.g. protective hats, high visibility jackets, protective gloves, protective footwear, etc.).

E) The briefing shall remind Members not to discuss any matter (other than through the formal question route [see item F) with the applicant or their representative or any other person on-site during the visit.

F) Should a Member wish to seek clarification of what the applicant or representative has said during the visit or wish to seek further information, then all such questions must be phrased in an open manner not disclosing any personal views. All answers shall be received without passing any further comment. The over-riding issue is that there must be no indication of any suggestion of apparent predetermination.

G) Members shall not attempt to explore other development opportunities during the site visit or express any personal view(s) about the proposed development.

H) One of the Members or an Officer of the Council shall keep a record of the visit detailing who attended, the areas visited and all question asked by Members as well as the developer's replies and the date / duration of the visit. This record of visit is to be agreed by all members of the visiting party and shall become part of the following Planning Committee's report. The report will be formally read aloud at the Planning Committee's meeting when considering the application so that the public present at the meeting are aware of all the facts the Committee is taking into account when considering its view.

I) Members attending shall visit around the site as one group and not become divided into sub-groups. This again ensures that all members will have seen and heard the same information and also ensures that there is a complete single record.

J) Members attending site should be aware that informal conversation during the visit should be avoided as they may provide a situation which might compromise the Committee's impartiality. In the same way refreshments should be avoided as this may be construed as hospitality and again compromise the Committee's impartiality.

K) All Members shall leave the site together.