

VISIT REQUEST GUIDELINES

- 1 Any Member requesting a site visit must be able to demonstrate that there is at least an aspect of the proposed development which needs to be clarified on site - or that a site visit is necessary to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the likely impact of the proposed development. Any request for a site meeting **must** be made in writing (and the request explain the justification) to the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods, Planning and Public Protection Service (via Members' Services) **at least one clear working day** before the Committee meeting to which the original report is submitted, so that the request can be properly considered. A pro forma will be issued to Members for this purpose.
- 2 A site visit may be justified in the following circumstances:
 - a) where the proposal is likely to have a major visual impact which could only be fully appreciated on site;
 - b) where the likely impact of the proposed development on adjoining development is such that it can only be fully appreciated on site;
 - c) to gain a better understanding of policy issues against which the proposed development is to be judged;
 - d) where the proposed development is likely to have a major impact over a wide area; or
 - e) where there are significant objections to a proposed development which could only be fully taken into account by visiting the site (a large number of objections in itself is not sufficient justification).
- 3 The Strategic Director Neighbourhoods, Planning and Public Protection Service has delegated powers to agree a site visit. If the application is on the published agenda for the Planning Committee, he may withdraw that item from the agenda. Any objectors or applicants wishing to speak at the meeting will then be informed of the application being deferred pending a site visit.
- 4 A request for a site visit that is considered by the Planning Committee will only be accepted with a majority vote. Before a vote is taken the Chair will seek advice from the Strategic Director Neighbourhoods, Planning and Public Protection Service and indicate to the Committee whether he considers a site visit is justified. The reasons for the site visit will be minuted and site visits will, wherever possible, be arranged as a matter of urgency (in consultation with Members), so that the Committee at its following meeting can reconsider the application in question.

- 5 Provisional dates for site visits will be entered in the Corporate Diary and if they are not needed the visits will be cancelled.

VISITING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

- 1 A "Site Inspection Panel" will be established to include the Chair of the Planning Committee and three additional Members (who will not be Ward Members for the sites to be visited) selected on a rotational basis. As the site visit is only intended for information gathering purposes only, it will not be necessary for the Chair to attend all site visits if they are not available. Two further planning committee members will be invited in their place.
- 2 The local Ward Members will be invited to attend site inspection panel meetings and, although they will not be members of the panel, they can nevertheless make representations to the panel on site if they so wish.
- 3 Appropriate officers will attend to outline the application proposals and issues and to answer questions.
- 4 The applicant, objectors and any other interested parties will not be invited to the meeting, and will not therefore be able to participate or lobby.
- 5 If the panel requires access to the site the permission of the owner will need to be obtained beforehand but he/she will not be permitted to participate.
- 6 The purpose of the site visit will be to view the site, its relationship to the surroundings and to clarify points of fact. Discussions between Members on matters affecting the merits of the proposals will inevitably take place on site, but will be of an informal nature only as the meeting itself will be informal and will not have decision-making powers.
- 7 Notes will be taken of the site visit (by the Democratic Services Officer) and a brief summary of the facts established reported to the following meeting of the Planning Committee, along with the original report and recommendation. The notes will also give a flavour of the discussion which takes place at the site visit.
- 8 The final decision will then be taken at the Planning Committee, taking account of the information contained in the notes of the site inspection panel.
- 9 Third parties will be allowed to address the full Planning Committee in the Council Chamber in accordance with the procedures adopted by the Cabinet on 13 November 2001.