



## **RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **Planning Application Site Visits**

#### **Code of Practice**

##### **A. Making Arrangements for Site Visits**

1. If the Committee resolves to defer determination of an application to allow for a site visit, it is understood that the exercise is solely one of fact finding and viewing in the context of the particular proposals. The reasons for the deferral and the site visit will be clearly minuted.
2. In addition to any items deferred at a Committee meeting, officers will also make arrangements for other sites to be visited when it is considered that applications are likely to be controversial or of particular interest. Any Member may request that a particular site be added to the site visit list. Such requests will be considered by officers in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, but it may not always be possible to include such requests. Production of the final itinerary for the site visit list will be the responsibility of the Development Control Manager.
3. Officers will make arrangements in advance with applicants or their agents to gain access to sites as necessary. Officers will make it clear to applicants that they or their agents may attend the site visit only to observe the proceedings or to answer any questions from Members, and cannot use the visit as an opportunity to lobby Members upon the merits of the case. Any further representations should be made in writing to officers or through Ward Councillors.

##### **B. Protocol at Site Visits**

1. The Chairman will take charge of the proceedings with support from an officer as necessary.
2. Members shall group around the Chairman promptly at the site during the factual presentation and explanation of the case, in order to permit clear and efficient interchange of question and answer.
3. Members shall refrain from wandering during the presentation and explanation of the case and individual Members shall not engage in direct discussion with the applicant or agent at any time during a site visit except by questions direct through the Chairman.
4. Any applicant, agent of third party (e.g. an objector) who may be present shall only be permitted, at the discretion of the Chairman, to indicate points of fact which could assist Members in appreciating the circumstances of the site. Any attempt to lobby Members on the merits of the case will not be permitted, and either the Chairman or the officer will make this clear to any person present who may attempt to lobby in such a manner.
5. Members shall refrain from indicating their views upon the merits of the planning proposal on site, because comments of an 'ad hoc' nature can prove confusing or misleading to an applicant or agent, or to any third parties who may be within listening range. It must be recognised that the site visit acts solely as an opportunity for Members to gather the facts and information concerning the circumstances of a site. The process of debate and determination can only properly take place when all the information concerning an application is available at the official Committee meeting.