

PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER SITE VISITS	OP800	Issue no 002
	Date :	24/01/2006

1.	<p><u>Purpose</u></p> <p>To ensure consistent and appropriate procedures are followed in the conduct of Member Site Visits arising as part of the consideration of a planning application, or other development by the Development Control Committee.</p>		
2.	<p><u>Scope</u></p> <p>The conduct of any Site Visit to be undertaken by Members of the Development Control Committee as part of the consideration leading to the determination made under the planning Acts including the determination of any application for planning permission, Listed Building Consent, confirmation of a Tree Preservation Order etc. and the expediency of taking enforcement action.</p>		
3.	<p><u>Responsibilities</u></p> <p>Overall responsibility lies with the Development Control Manager (DCM). Specific duties are carried out by Principal Planners (PP), Senior Planners (SP), Planners (PO), Committee Co-ordinators (CC) and the Committee Support Officers (CSO) in the Council office.</p>		
4.	<p><u>Procedure</u></p>		
		Action	Doc
4.1	<p>The Development Control Committee will resolve to defer a decision on a planning application or other planning matter in order that a Site Visit (SV) can take place to assist the consideration. It should be noted that Site Visits should normally only be agreed where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Particular site factors are significant in terms of the weight attached to them relative to other factors or the difficulty of their assessment in the absence of a site inspection and/or • There are significant policy or precedent implications and specific site factors need to be carefully addressed (Medway Planning Code of Conduct April 2004) <p>Members should note that the site visits are for fact-finding reasons to assist Member deliberations and are not for discussing the merits of the proposal which should only be done at Committee.</p> <p>The DCM or officer attending the Committee and CC should note the reasons for the deferral for the Minutes.</p>	DCM CC	DCC minutes
4.2	<p>As soon as possible following the meeting, and at least within one working day, the DCM should inform the case officer that the item has been deferred.</p>	DCM	

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4.7	<p>The SV will be attended by the CO, PP or DCM who should ensure that he/she takes the file, a scale rule, mobile phone and any necessary equipment needed to explain the proposal and is appropriately dressed.</p> <p>The CO/PP/DCM should ensure that he/she arrives at the site in good time. If it is the first SV of the day he/she should arrive 10 minutes before the official start time to be able to deal with any concerns from members of the public or non-Council attendees.</p>	CO/ PP/ DCM	
4.8	<p>The site visit will be conducted by the Chairman of the Development Control Committee or their nominated deputy but the CO/PP/DCM will be there to advise on procedures and protocol. The visit will follow the following format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chairman will call the session to order and explain the reason for the visit and the procedure to be followed making it clear that no decision will be taken and the date of the meeting where the application will be re-considered. • The CO/PP/DCM will explain the application proposal or the development under consideration; summarise the representations received; identify the planning issues and how the officer recommendation has been reached. • The Chairman will ask the applicant/agent if they wish to add any points; ask if any members of the public/other attendees wish to comment or ask questions, ask Committee Members if they wish to ask questions or seek points of clarification, then questions will be fielded either by the Chairman, the CO/PP/DCM or the applicant/agent – to be decided by the Chairman • The Chairman will close that part of the Visit, confirming that no decision will be taken and the date of the meeting when the application will be next considered but that no further comments will be heard at that time. • Members of the Committee will look at the site visiting those parts deemed necessary including any vantage points from neighbouring property. <p>When the Chairman considers that the time is appropriate he/she will announce that the Site Visit is formally closed.</p>	CO/PP /DCM	

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	<u>Procedure</u>	Action	Doc
	<p>During the SV Members must stay together as a group to ensure that there is no opportunity for individual lobbying and all are able to consider the development on the basis of the same information. If there are any further questions they should be addressed to the Chairman so that they can be answered in a proper manner so that all can hear.</p> <p>Members must be aware that they have no powers of entry and can only enter land or a building at the agreement of the owner/occupier. Members of the public have no rights to accompany the Councillors visiting the site and likewise may only enter land or a building with the permission of the owner/occupant.</p>		
4.9	The CO/PP/DCM will make a note of the persons attending the SV. This note will be added to the Supplementary Agenda advice sheet for the next Committee meeting together with a brief summary of the issues raised at the SV.	CO/PP /DCM	Supp. Agenda
4.10	The CO/PP/DCM will send, email or fax the attendance sheet to Members Services at the Civic Centre	CO/PP /DCM	