

### **Committee site visit protocol**

As of September 2025, this draft protocol applies to major planning applications only. Site visits for all other types of application will remain virtual via Microsoft Teams.

#### **Arrangements for the site visit.**

Planning Committee site visits will take place before the application is considered by the Planning Committee. The date, time and order of site visits will be circulated to Planning Committee Members, local Ward Members and the Parish Council. Any Councillor needing assistance with transport to the site visit should contact the Governance Team by email [governance@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:governance@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk) or phone 01246 217391, three working days before the site visit is due to take place.

If access onto the site is necessary, the applicant or agent will be informed of the site visit and asked to ensure that access is available.

#### **Attendance at the site visit.**

If an application is sufficiently important to warrant a site visit then all Members should attend. The site visit will be undertaken to view the site and identify any aspects of it or the surrounding area. No debate on the merits of the application will be undertaken.

The persons entitled to be present at all times during the site visit are Members of the Planning Committee and appropriate Officers.

Local Ward Members and Parish Council representatives may join the site visit group but only to observe and listen. Where this happens the representative(s) will not be permitted to address the Planning Committee or its Members unless asked to identify physical features such as boundaries or access points.

The land owner or their agent or the applicant may need to accompany Members on the site visit. Where this happens that person will not be permitted to address the Planning Committee or its Members unless asked to identify physical features such as boundaries or access points.

Members of the public may attend and listen to the proceedings where these are conducted in public areas, but they have no right to enter private land or buildings.

Conduct at the site visit.

The following procedural rules will be observed in the holding of all Planning Committee site visits:

Officers will arrange the site visit in advance with relevant parties. There is no right to enter on private land without permission of the land owner.

Where appropriate, officers will obtain permission from the land owner or his/her agent for those invited to attend the site visit to enter the land. If permission is not given for Members and Officers and other interested parties to enter, the site will have to be viewed from the public highway/areas.

The Chair (or Vice Chair) will control proceedings throughout.

The Chair will explain that the purpose of the site visit is to only obtain information relevant to the determination of the application.

The Chair will summarise the proceedings and the constraints as set out below:

The Chair will introduce the Planning Officer who will describe the proposals to Members with reference to matters of fact and features on the land and the submitted plans/drawings and summarise the relevant issues and material considerations.

It is expected that Members will already be familiar with the planning officer's report where one has been provided.

Members may ask the Planning Officer for factual clarification of any planning matter relating to the proposal or surrounding land, for example, distances to adjoining or objectors' properties or the location of the planned development.

Other officers may be present to provide other specialist/expert advice/information where relevant/required (e.g. Highways Engineers, Tree Officers or Environmental Health Officers etc.).

Members will then be invited through the Chair to ask any questions of fact or seeking clarification from the Officers present. Members should not direct these questions to the applicant or others present. Any matters not to hand will be reported at the Planning Committee meeting.

Discussion on the merits of the application will not be permitted, and Members should refrain from making comments on the proposal.

Representatives of Objectors and/or supporters may be invited/allowed to attend the site visit as interested parties. However, the right of a representative to address the Planning Committee does not arise until this item is reached on the agenda during the relevant meeting of the Planning Committee.

Presentations from interested parties should on no account be made. However, occasionally it may be appropriate for interested parties to be asked, through the Chair, to point out important or relevant site features.

At no point during the site visit will debate or comment on the planning merits or otherwise of the proposal be permitted, as the proper time for such debate/comment is at the relevant meeting of the Planning Committee.

A Ward Councillor(s) may attend the site visit however, any Ward Councillors will refrain from debating or commenting on the planning merits or otherwise of the proposal. Ward Councillors will be permitted to make representations at the relevant meeting of the Planning Committee.

During the site visit, no separate discussions regarding the application must take place with officers or Members and either applicants, objectors or supporters. In order to assist in ensuring that Members receive the same information, they are required to keep together in one group with the Chair and the Planning Officer during the entirety of the accompanied site visit. They will not break-off to discuss the proposal separately with residents or the applicant.

During the site visit, Officers and Planning Committee Members will not accept any representations (including verbal presentations, documents, letters or petitions) from applicants, objectors or supporters. Any representations should be sent to the Planning department and these will be reported at the relevant meeting of the Planning Committee.

No hospitality will be accepted by Officers and Members from the applicant or any other interested party present at the site visit.

The Planning Committee Members present at the site visit will sign an attendance sheet.

The Chair (or Vice Chair) will conclude the site visit. Members will leave the site promptly, as a group, and refrain from talking to the applicant, objectors or other interested parties.

No indication of the views of Members or the likely outcome of the Planning Committee's deliberations on the application will be given. To do so might imply that a Member's mind is already made up.

If Members require further information or clarification of any aspect of the development, the officer(s) attending the site visit will be asked to ensure that such information is available by the time the application is considered by Members at the relevant meeting of the Planning Committee.

After the site visit and at the subsequent Committee(s):

The application will be reported to the next available Planning Committee for debate and determination.

To ensure openness and transparency the Chair/Officer will provide feedback to the meeting on the key issues arising/identified from the site visit.

Mechanism for review of the content and scope of the protocol.

It is proposed that this protocol is reviewed as part of the annual review of the Council's Constitution. The annual review will consider, amongst other things, whether it is proportionate to expand in-person site visits to non-major applications. Regard will be had to the attendance levels at both in-person and online site visits in determining whether the scope of this protocol.