

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
Date:	14 th January 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	4
TITLE:	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS		
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, a Committee Site Visit might be appropriate before the meeting of the next Committee or at a future date and confirm relevant site visit dates as shown in diary.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you resolve to visit the sites in the Appendix which will be provided with the update Agenda on day of forthcoming Planning Applications Committee and identify any further site visits. That you confirm the site visit date and time shown in your diary.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The potential list of agenda items submitted since the last meeting of the Planning Applications Committee will be provided with the update Agenda on the day of forthcoming Planning Applications Committee. Where appropriate, I will identify those applications that I feel warrant a site visit by the Committee prior to formal consideration of the proposals.
- 3.2 Where a councillor has called in a normal delegated application for a Committee decision, they may also request a site visit if they consider it appropriate.
- 3.3 Officers may also recommend a site visit if they intend to report a normally delegated application to the Committee for a decision.
- 3.4 A site visit may also be proposed in connection with a planning enforcement issue which is before the Committee for consideration.
- 3.5 Site visits in the above circumstances should take place in advance of a Committee decision and should only be used where the expected benefit is substantial.

- 3.6 Site visits consist simply of an inspection by a viewing Committee, with officer assistance, as the most fair and equitable process between applicant and objectors. Site visits are normally unaccompanied (ie without applicant and objectors). If accompanied, applicants and objectors will have no right to speak but may observe the process and answer questions when asked. Applicants will be informed of such visits as a matter of practice.
- 3.7 A site visit is only likely to be necessary if the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from the plans and any supporting material including photographs taken by officers (although, if this is the case, additional illustrative material should have been requested); or, there is a good reason why the comments of the applicant and objectors cannot be expressed adequately in writing; or, the proposal is particularly contentious.
- 3.8 There may also be occasions where officers or councillors request a post completion site visit in order to review the quality or impact of a particular development.
- 3.9 Where for capacity reasons, it has not proved possible to accommodate all the agreed sites on the first available visit date, any outstanding sites will be added to a reserve list for inclusion on the next suitable visit date.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 The planning development management process (including Committee site visits) considers planning applications and thereby contributes to the Council's strategic aims in terms of :
- To Develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley
 - To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
- 4.2 Determining planning applications can also support the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy (Reading 2020).
- A Fairer Reading for All
 - Children and Young People
 - Cleaner and Greener Environments
 - Culture Leisure and Sport
 - Decent and affordable Housing
 - Healthy People and Lifestyles
 - Safer and Stronger Communities
 - Thriving Economy and Skills
 - Transport and Accessible Spaces

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 5.1 Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Officers when assessing an application and when making a recommendation to the Committee, will have regard to its duties Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Non arising from this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reading Borough Council Planning Code of Conduct.

Local Safety Practice 2013 Planning Applications Committee site visits.