


<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PROTOCOL FOR CARRYING OUT</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PLANNING SITE VISITS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(Adopted 2 November 2020)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reviewed November 2022</b></p>	
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Why have a site visit?

Not every planning issue will require a site visit, however sometimes it is necessary for members to gain further information before submitting a formal response to the local planning authority. Also in some instances Councillors may be asked by the applicant to give an opinion on a proposed development prior to submission of a planning application.

Councillors and the Clerk need to exercise care when meeting any third parties. For this purpose, third parties include members of the public, councillors and officials of other authorities, developers and contractors.

Councillors will meet and communicate with residents and perhaps official bodies in their role as an individual councillor on many occasions. Input from the public is important to ensure that councillors understand public views when taking decisions. Nothing in these guidelines should be seen to restrict the openness of councillors to public input. Parish Councillors can also perform a valuable role passing on residents' concerns to Wyre Forest District Council or Worcestershire County Council and other statutory authorities, but any such communication should make it clear that the councillor is speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the Parish Council.

#### **SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF OR REPRESENTING THE COUNCIL**

Only the Clerk can commit the council contractually. Councillors cannot speak for the council unless this has been agreed at a preceding council meeting. The Chairman or in their absence the Vice Chairman can on their own authority explain the Council's position to official bodies without prior approval subject to that view having been specifically agreed and minuted.

Whenever possible at least 2 councillors, or a councillor and the clerk, should be present at any council related meeting. This will reduce the risk of accusations of improper conduct and reduce personal risk.

#### **SITE VISITS**

During site visits any contact with applicants or members of the public should be treated with caution so as to avoid lobbying (or the perception of lobbying). It is appropriate that questions of a factual nature can be asked of applicants or neighbours, but councillors should not put forward arguments for or against the proposals.

Site visits should be advised in writing to the clerk and subsequently recorded in the minutes when the planning application is being discussed.

#### **PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Where possible the clerk should obtain permission from the site owner for the council to visit the site.

#### **PROCEDURE**

- a. The Parish Council or the Clerk will have determined the need for a site visit and the names of those councillors to attend.
- b. Councillors will be notified by the clerk of the time and place of the site visit, and it is recommended that the clerk is present.
- c. The applicant and/or landowner may be present if the site visit takes place on-site rather than adjacent to the site.
- d. Members of the public should not attend site visits, unless invited to do so by the Parish Council or Clerk
- e. The Code of Conduct applies: Interests should be declared and councillors should not attend if they have a disclosable interest.
- f. The Chairman of the Parish Council, or committee Chairman, should ensure that the site visit is properly carried out, taking advice from the clerk.
- g. There must be no debate, representations from groups or individuals, or decision at the site visit.
- h. Councillors may pose questions and ask the clerk to take notes on the issues raised and the information gained on site
- i. All points should be objective, relevant and material.
- j. Councillors must be very careful not to express any opinions about the proposal whilst on the site.
- k. When the chairman deems the site visit closed, all councillors and clerk will leave.

## **REPORTING BACK**

- 1. The site visit will be reported to the relevant committee or council by the clerk who will have notes prepared, to be read out or circulated.
- 2. The clerk will report on any information-gathering as a result of questions raised at the site visit. The council/committee will take the report into account when coming to its decision.

**Next Review Date November 2024**