



## Tenterden Town Council

### Site Visit Policy

<b>Reviewed</b>	<b>Adopted</b>
Reviewed by Policy and Procedure sub-committee	17/08/2023
Reviewed by Planning Committee	04/09/2023
Adopted by Finance & General Purposes Committee	11/09/2023
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## Introduction

This policy provides guidance for members of the town council visiting the site in the civil parish of Tenderden of any planning application, lodged for decision with the borough council. Its purpose is to ensure that an open and consistent approach is followed in the interests of transparency and in respect of procedures and administrative arrangements. These guidelines seek to ensure that the interests of all parties involved in the process are dealt with equitably and that necessary steps are taken to ensure that actions of council members will not result in any perception of predetermination.

## Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, “applicant” refers to the individual or organisation who has applied for planning permission and any agent or representative acting on their behalf.

## Purpose

The purpose of any site visit is to:

- a) view a site and its surroundings to better appreciate facts that are important in consideration of the application.
- b) To assist in the appraisal of any constraints and opportunities afforded by the proposed development and its potential impact.
- c) To have a better understanding of any issues raised by interested parties.

## Guidance

- a) Any decision to undertake a site visit will be made by the Planning Committee. In an instance where a visit needs to be undertaken before the next scheduled meeting (usually where the date of determination is imminent), an officer will seek views from committee members as to whether a site visit is necessary and will take action based on the majority view.
- b) Arrangement of site visits and communication with the applicant must be undertaken by officers.
- c) Councillors must be aware of the need to comply with the Code of Conduct during site visits, and in the case where there is any interest (as set out in the Code), should seek advice as to whether they should attend.
- d) The site visit must be a single visit and shall not comprise of multiple visits with different members of the Planning Committee attending. All members of the Planning Committee must attend site visits or give reason(s) for non-attendance.
- e) Councillors must not undertake any site visits unaccompanied: at least two councillors and an officer must be in attendance throughout.
- f) The visit is a private visit comprising of members of the town council and representatives of the applicant. No other person (e.g. member of the public, an objector, other interested party, etc.) shall be a part of the visiting party.
- g) When conducting site visits all town council members, must have due regard to health and safety of themselves and others and follow any given safety instructions on site. Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn.
- h) Councillors and Officers will enter the site together as a group. Any councillors arriving early must wait until the Officer is present before entering the site.
- i) The Officer present must keep a record of the visit detailing date and duration of the visit, who attended, the areas visited, and a brief summary of the questions asked and the applicant's replies. This record of visit must be reported to the next meeting of the Planning Committee.

- j) Site visits are not formally constituted meetings of the Town Council. It is important, therefore, that no decisions are taken or seen to be taken on the application at the visit.
- k) Merits or otherwise of the application, must not be discussed with the applicant.
- l) Should a Member wish to seek clarification of what the applicant has said during the visit or wish to seek further information, then all such questions must be phrased in an open manner not disclosing any personal views. All answers shall be received without passing any further comment.
- m) Members must not attempt to explore other development opportunities during the site visit or express any personal view(s) about the application.
- n) Members attending must move around the site as one group and not become divided into sub-groups. This ensures that all members will have seen and heard the same information and also ensures that there is a complete single record of the visit.
- o) Members attending the site should be aware that informal conversation during the visit could result in a situation which could compromise their impartiality.
- p) All officers and town council members must leave the site together.