



Chorley Borough Council  
Guidelines for Member Site Visits

1. Purpose of these Guidelines

The purpose of the guidelines is to assist the Chair and Members of the Committee in the conduct of site visits. It is imperative that the impression of any partiality on the part of any Members is avoided if the reputation of Members, the Planning System and the position of the Council as a Planning Authority is to retain public confidence.

2. The Purpose of Site Visits

Site Visits are not meetings of the Committee and are not intended to involve discussion of the merits of any planning application. The appropriate place for any such discussion is a formally convened meeting of the Development Control Committee at the Town Hall.

Site Visits are intended to give Members of the Committee the opportunity of visiting and viewing the site and its locality.

Site Visits should be the exception, not the rule. They should not be used as an excuse to delay the determination of a planning application.

3. Role of the Chair of the Committee

The Chair is responsible for the conduct of the site visit and his/her decision is final on all issues. In his/her absence the Deputy Chair will assume responsibility.

4. Role of the Committee Member

Members must try to attend site visits organised by the Council where possible and ensure that any information, which is gained from the site visit, is reported back to the Committee, so that all Members have the same information. Members should treat the site visit as an opportunity to seek information and observe the site and should only ask questions or seek clarification from officers on matters, which are relevant to the planning application.

5. The Ward Councillor

The Ward Councillor will be invited to attend the Site Visit even if they are not a Member of the Development Control Committee.

As invitees of the Development Control Committee they will be expected to conduct themselves in the same way as Members of the Committee and Officers of the Council. They will not be permitted to address the Members of the Committee but to limit themselves to viewing the site and raising questions of fact relating to the proposed development.

6. Information to be provided to Members

All Members of the Development Control Committee and the appropriate Ward Members will be sent an email and a paper copy with details of the date, time and location(s) of the Site Visit.

To assist Members the officers report containing details of the application and consultation responses and representations received to date will be provided to Members prior to the visit. Members should familiarise themselves with details of the application by reading the appropriate report beforehand.

7. Borough Officers

Officers are impartial and neutral. They attend the visit to assist Members. Officers of the Development Control Section will acquaint Members with details of the application and the principal planning issues. Where appropriate, officers of other Directorates will also address Members. They will draw Members attention to details on the site itself and at other places in the locality of the site as appropriate. References will be made to the planning application in question but these will be for the purpose of explanation and should not be taken as implying any partiality on the part of the officers concerned.

8. Applicant and Landowner

The Applicant and other relevant parties will be notified in advance when the Site Visit is to take place and if necessary asked to arrange access to the site. It is not possible to prevent either the applicant or a landowner, if separate from attending the visit. However the purpose of the visit will be made clear to them by the Chair and it will be explained that they have no right to address the Members although they may wish to be prepared to answer any questions which Members wish to raise.

9. Local Residents/Objectors

Opponents of a proposed development may be present at the site in order to lobby Members. Members should take care to maintain their impartiality and not be drawn into a series of mini-debates, which may quickly degenerate into arguments. This is not the purpose of the site visit and may leave residents/objectors with a distorted impression of Members objectivity.

10. Other Arrangements

Members are required to make their own way and meet on site. Members requiring transport need to contact the Democratic Services Officer before the day so that necessary arrangements can be put in place. Members are also requested to wear suitable footwear.

11. Gifts and hospitality

Councillors and officers should be cautious about accepting gifts or hospitality. Normally, offers should be politely declined unless receipt of the gift or hospitality is unavoidable – for example, where to refuse light refreshments on an extended visit could cause offence – those receiving it should ensure that it is of a minimum level.