PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

EXTRACT FROM THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

SITE INSPECTIONS

5.6.12 Site Inspections

5.6.13 Site Inspections by the committee can be helpful in reaching a decision on issues where site circumstances are clearly fundamental to the decision. This is true particularly when the issues concern, for example, visual impact, the character of an historic building or the effect of development on local amenity. However, site inspections are costly, cause delay to decisions and are an unsuitable place for holding a reasoned debate.

The criteria for holding site inspections are:

(a) the character or appearance of the development itself is a fundamental planning consideration; or

(b) a judgement is required on visual impact; or

(c) the setting and surroundings are fundamental to the determination or to the conditions being considered, and cannot reasonably be made without visiting the site in question.

The chairperson of the planning committee and the assistant director Environment and place will determine which applications will be the subject of a prior site inspection. This does not prevent any member of the committee requesting a site inspection of a site at the committee meeting when it has not already been visited by this procedure.

5.6.14 Site Inspections should not be held when inspection of the site is irrelevant to the material conditions. Any member of the committee may request a site inspection, but reasons based on the above criteria must be stated.

5.6.15 **The purpose of the site visit is fact finding**. Officers will be able to point out relevant features of the site and surroundings. You will be able to see the physical features of the site and ask questions through the chairperson or the officers to seek clarification. Neither the applicant/agent nor third parties will be allowed to participate in the site inspection. The input of these parties is made at the committee meeting itself. At the discretion of the chairperson of the planning and regulatory committee the appropriate parish or town council may be invited to observe the inspection. In these circumstances the parish or town council may not contribute to the opportunity to ask questions of officers on site.

5.6.16 **No discussion of the merits of the case is permitted at site inspections and all questions from you will be put through the chairperson.**

5.6.17 The visiting party will stay together as a group. Wherever possible the party should arrive at and leave the site together.

5.6.18 As a member of the planning and regulatory committee when on site visits you should not make any comments that could create an impression that you had

already formed a view on the merits of the application. No decision on the application should be made until the meeting of the planning and regulatory committee at which the application is to be considered, when they will have before them all necessary information to be able to make an informed decision, including any material facts arising from the site visit which the assistant director environment and place considers should be reported to the committee.

5.6.19 Conduct of visits

(a) visits will be conducted in a formal manner.

(b) the chairperson or vice-chairperson will open the visit and remind members of its purpose and conduct.

(c) Officers will highlight issues **relevant to site inspection**. If issues are raised which necessitate consultation with the applicant or his agent, this should be done after the close of the visit and the outcome reported to the subsequent committee.

(d) Ward members will be invited to site inspections in their wards and asked to highlight local issues relevant to the site inspection.

(e) the chairperson or vice-chairperson will close the visit.

5.6.20 General matters

(a) No decision will be made concerning the application on site.

(b) no formal notes will be made.

(c) no hospitality will be accepted.

5.6.21 **If you find it necessary to visit a site alone (perhaps because it was not possible for you to attend a committee visit), you should view the site only from public vantage points, seek to avoid any discussion with interested parties, and, if there is such discussion, make it clear that no decision on the application will be taken until it has been discussed at committee.**