

Cairngorms Planning Advice Note

Planning Committee Site Visits

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Why and when have site visits?

The purpose of a Planning Committee site visit is to help Committee Members understand the details of a planning application in the context of its site and the land and buildings around it.

The Planning Committee does not normally need a site visit. All of the information needed to determine a planning application will be in the relevant Committee papers so a site visit is only held when the application is for a very complicated or contentious development.

Site visits can be proposed and agreed by Committee Members or arranged between the Head of Planning and Committee Convener. The Committee Standing Orders provide more detail on how site visits are arranged.

Site visits will normally take place on the day of the Planning Committee when the application is scheduled to be considered. They will be led by a CNPA Planning Officer.

Who can attend?

The Planning Service will notify interested parties including the applicant, agent, any objectors, supporters or Community Council representatives of the time and date of a site visit. Such parties are welcome to attend the site visit. For land that is outwith public access rights (e.g. a working quarry) the permission of the site owner will be required. The notification from the CNPA will explain any restrictions or special arrangements people need to make in order to attend.

What happens on a site visit?

Site visits will start at the time notified. The Convener of the Committee will oversee the conduct of site visits with support from a Planning Officer.

The Convener will welcome everyone, explaining what will happen during the visit and how people attending are expected to behave. The Planning Officer will explain any health and safety issues or rules that the people attending must follow. The Planning Officer will then summarise the proposed development and the issues that are relevant.

The visit will normally involve going to a few locations in and around the site where features of interest or particular views of the site will be pointed out. There is no note or minute kept of a site visit.

At the site visit the Committee Members should:

- arrive at the site meeting point at the time notified so that the Convener and Planning Officer are available to coordinate the visit. Ideally they should travel to the site at the same time. If Committee Members arrive early, they must take care to ensure that they maintain their objectivity about the proposed development;
- keep together in one group with the Convener and the Planning Officer and not engage in discussion, either individually or in small groups, with the applicant or any other people present;
- ask questions only through the Convener and seek clarification about any planning matter relating to the proposal or surrounding land;
- not, at any time, debate the planning merits or otherwise of a proposal until such time as they are in the relevant Committee meeting.

Interested parties attending the site visit should:

- be quiet and listen to the Committee Member's questions and answers;
- only speak to the Members if the Convener has agreed to allow it, or if asked to by the Convener and then only point out relevant site features and facts. Interested parties are not allowed to make points about the merits or problems of the proposed development or to introduce new information.

Health and Safety

Everyone wants the site visit to go well. Some sites can be dangerous (for example due to traffic, machinery or hazards that may not be obvious) and it is important that everyone stays safe. The Planning Officer is the Authority's delegated 'Safety Officer' for the site visit and will have prepared a risk assessment for it. This will provide the basis for the safety briefing and any decisions taken by the Planning Officer about the health and safety arrangements. Everybody attending the site visit must follow any instructions given to keep themselves and the whole group as safe as possible.

Further advice

You can get more advice from the Cairngorms National Park Authority planning service at planning@cairngorms.co.uk
Tel: 01479 873535