

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES

TO:	PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE		
Date:	6th October 2021	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	POTENTIAL SITE VISITS FOR COMMITTEE ITEMS		
SERVICE:	PLANNING	WARDS:	BOROUGH WIDE
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1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To identify those sites where, due to the sensitive or important nature of the proposals, Councillors are advised that a Site Visit would be appropriate before the matter is presented at Committee and to confirm how the visit will be arranged. A list of potential sites is appended to this report with an officer note added to say if recommended for a site visit or not.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That you note this report and confirm if the site or sites indicated on the appended list are to be visited by Councillors.
- 2.2 Confirm if there are any other sites Councillors consider necessary to visit before reaching a decision on an application.
- 2.3 Confirm how the site(s) agreed should be visited will be carried out - accompanied by officers or unaccompanied.

3. THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 Appended to this report is a list of applications received that may be presented to Committee for a decision in due course. Officers will normally indicate if a site would benefit from being visited to inform your decision making or Councillors may request that a site is visited.
- 3.2 A site visit is only likely to be necessary if the impact of the proposed development is difficult to visualise from the plans and any supporting material or if there is a good reason why the comments of the applicant and objectors cannot be expressed adequately in writing; or, the proposal is particularly contentious.
- 3.3 It is possible that these difficulties will arise at Committee during consideration of an application, in which case it is appropriate for Councillors to seek a deferral to allow a visit to be carried out to assist in reaching the correct decision.

3.4 Accompanied site visits consist of an arranged inspection by a viewing Committee, with officers in attendance and by arrangement with the applicant or their agent. Applicants and objectors however will have no right to speak but may observe the process and answer questions when asked. The visit is an information gathering opportunity and not a decision making forum.

3.5 Unaccompanied site visits can take place where the site is easily viewable from public areas and allows Councillors to visit the site when convenient to them. In these instances, the case officer will provide a briefing note on the application and the main issues to be considered by Councillors when visiting the site.

3.6 There may also be occasions where officers or Councillors request a post completion site visit in order to review the quality or impact of a particular development.

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

4.1 The processing of planning applications contributes to creating a sustainable environment with active communities and helping the economy within the Borough as identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan:

1. Healthy Environments
2. Thriving Communities
3. Inclusive Economy

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

5.1 Statutory neighbour consultation takes place on planning applications.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Officers when assessing an application and when making a recommendation to the Committee, will have regard to its duties Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None arising from this report.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).

- 8.2 The Planning Service uses policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly by making efficient use of land and using sustainable materials and building methods. As a team we have also reduced the amount of resources (paper and printing) we use to carry out our work.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The cost of site visits is met through the normal planning service budget and Councillor costs.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Reading Borough Council Planning Code of Conduct.

APPENDIX 1

Potential Site Visit List:

Ward: Tilehurst

Application reference: 211399

Application type: Variation of Condition

Site address: The Avenue School, The Avenue Centre, Conwy Close, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4BZ

Proposal: Redevelopment of school playing field to erect a mixed used educational centre to include special needs school, community uses and ancillary educational staff offices and conference facilities for the Reading Education Centre, incorporating new access road, parking and highway works with associated landscaping and re-provision of public open space without complying with condition 5 of planning permission 06/00253/REG3 (060436)

Reason for Committee item: Reading Borough Council application

Visit not recommended by officers