REPORT TO:	**DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE**	**AGENDA ITEM:**
DATE OF MEETING:	**4TH NOVEMBER 2008**	**CATEGORY: DELEGATED**
REPORT FROM:	**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**	**OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A**
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	**NEIL BETTERIDGE (595895)**	**DOC:**
SUBJECT:	**PROCEDURE FOR VISITING APPLICATION SITES**	**REF:**
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	**ALL**	**TERMS OF REFERENCE: DC01**

1.0 Reason for Exempt

1.1 Not applicable.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the suggested procedure for visiting application sites, as set out in the report, be approved and adopted.

3.0 Purpose of Report

3.1 To consider a revised procedure for visiting application sites, as discussed at the last Meeting.

4.0 Detail

4.1 At the last Meeting, Members requested a report on possible revised arrangements for visiting application sites prior to Meetings. Primarily, this could avoid inconvenience to members of the public and public speakers who currently, may attend a Committee Meeting to hear its deferral for a site visit then also have to attend the following Meeting three or four weeks later to hear its determination after the site visit.

4.2 Presently, site visits are held on applications following a decision of the Committee. Usually, there is little debate on an application if there is a proposer and seconder for a site visit as such a motion is usually proposed immediately after the Officer's visual presentation and is normally carried without opposition. The site visit is then undertaken prior to the next Committee Meeting three or four weeks later, which gives rise to the following issues:-

- All interested parties have to wait longer than expected for a decision.

- Quite often, there are public speakers due to be heard who have to decide quickly, without consulting any colleagues, whether to address the Committee immediately following the decision to visit the site or wait until the next Meeting, after Members have visited the site.
- Members of the public and other interested parties in attendance at the Meeting, some of whom may have travelled considerable distances, can often be frustrated by having sat for a lengthy period through the Meeting only to hear very little debate followed by a decision to defer consideration for a site visit. They then have to attend the next Meeting three or four weeks later to hear a debate and a decision.
- The delay in the decision adversely affects the performance statistics relating to the speed of decision-making.

4.3 Officers have discussed various possible procedures with the Chairman to alleviate the above issues and accordingly, the following process is now suggested:-

- Prior to the printing of the agenda, the Head of Planning Services will discuss each application with the Chairman and assess whether it would be in the public interest and beneficial for Members to visit the site prior to the Meeting bearing in mind the issues involved and representations made.
- Arising from the above, the Head of Planning Services, in consultation with the Chairman, will be authorised to determine which applications shall be subject to a site visit prior to the Meeting. The schedule of site visits will be despatched with the agenda, as at present.

4.4 It is stressed that a site visit on an application may still be agreed at a Committee Meeting. This would then be held prior to the next Meeting, as per the current arrangements. The suggested revised procedure outlined above is intended to address, where possible, the issues in 4.2 above by anticipating the need for a site visit in the public interest based on the merits of the application. In turn, this will lead to an earlier decision.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The suggested procedure will lead to quicker decisions to the benefit of all interested parties.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 The suggested procedure will improve the process for the wider community.

7.0 Background Papers

7.1 None