

# **Covid-19 Planning Site Visit Protocol**

## **Dover District Council**

Issue date: August 2020

In force until superseded

### **Background**

This document sets out how the planning team will carry out site visits for planning applications as well as pre application enquiries in order to take account of health & safety issues relating to Covid - 19.

### **When site visits must not take place**

Dwellings occupied by any person experiencing symptoms associated with Covid-19, or who has the virus, or who is self-isolating must not be visited. The site visit should be arranged for when it is safe to visit, with an extension of time for determination of the application agreed.

### **Pre-screening procedure**

Where it is necessary to enter the site, the applicant/agent for the application (or the occupier, if visiting neighbouring property) will be contacted prior to the visit date.

The following questions will be asked prior to any visit (and as close as possible to conducting the visit):

Q1. Do you or anyone else in the household currently have Covid-19, commonly referred to as coronavirus?

Q2. Are you or anyone in the household experiencing symptoms associated with Covid-19, such as a new continuous cough, a high temperature or loss or change to sense of smell or taste?

Q3. Are you or anyone else in the household self-isolating?

The visit will **only** go ahead if the applicant/agent has answered all the questions with "No"

### **Advice to agents/applicants/occupiers in advance of site visit**

Officers will request that the following good practice and actions be taken by the applicant/agent/neighbouring occupier beforehand to facilitate the site visit:

a. That access, where possible, will be made available to areas for inspection by side or back gates and without the need to go through any building.

b. All doors, gates and entrances will be secured open where practical to do so, for the duration of the visit to prevent officers needing to touch handles and other surfaces.

c. If an internal inspection is needed of any buildings that are unoccupied, that access is arranged and that agents and applicants where possible wait outside whilst the visit takes place so as to avoid passing in narrow corridors or coming into contact with officers.

d. Any pets must be kept securely away from the areas being inspected and Officers will not engage with them.

### **Carrying out a Site Visit**

Upon arrival, the officer will ask whether the medical situation with the applicant/agent/household has changed since the most recent communication.

The officer will explain to the applicant/agent precisely how the site visit will take place and the procedures to be followed, at the outset of the visit. The officer will explain the social distancing requirements of 2 metres. Normal behavioural conventions such as shaking hands or holding doors open should not be undertaken if they involve touching or breaching social distancing guidelines.

During the course of the visit the officer will be left to inspect the relevant areas and if (exceptionally) an individual applicant or agent needs to attend or be present, a 2 metre separation will be maintained from the officer when moving around. No other individuals should be in the area being inspected for the duration of the visit.

Before entering any building, the officer will put on a face mask and may wear disposable gloves.

Discussions on applications, including potential changes and amendments, will be addressed so as to avoid the need for any contact or sharing of plans and spaces.

If an accidental breach of the social distancing rule occurs, the officer may give a warning about the 2 metre requirement, and state that any further breach will lead to the visit being ended. If social distancing is not maintained owing to actions by the applicant/agent or other members of their household, the officer will end the site visit and leave the property.

### **Health & well-being is paramount**

It will be for the officer to decide whether it is safe to enter a site and carry out the site visit and there may be unforeseen circumstances not covered by the above procedures. Should an officer feel unsafe at any time at the commencement of or during a site visit, they shall indicate to the applicant/agent the reasons why and end the site visit.

These procedures exist to protect the agent/applicant as well as the officer.