

Your Right to Speak Against an Application

As well as members of the public, there are a number of organisations known as "statutory consultees" that must be asked for their opinion about planning applications. For developments in Saham one of these is our Parish Council, and others included highways and ecology specialists at Norfolk County Council. When the minimum time has elapsed since an application was publicised by Breckland Council (normally 3 weeks) and when all statutory consultees have responded, the planning officer assigned to the case will write a report summarising the nature of the application and the comments received about it. At the end of the report will be a recommendation on whether to permit or refuse the application. A final decision is then made by the Breckland Council Planning Committee which is a group of district councillors. That committee holds a monthly meeting to decide applications, usually on the first Monday of the month, at the Council's office in Dereham. At those meetings for each application being considered the planning officer briefly summarises his / her report, then the following groups have the chance to speak if they wish:

1. The applicant or a representative;
2. Someone from the applicable parish council;
3. A district councillor representing the area in which the proposed development is located;
4. Members of the public

Each group has 3 minutes to speak. In the case of members of the public, if more than one wants to speak the time is divided equally between them - or they can agree between themselves that one person will speak on behalf of all.

If you do wish to speak you must apply to do so with Breckland Council no later than the Friday before the Committee meeting. The most likely reason for wanting to speak would be if you disagree with the planning officer's recommendation for the application.

If you are going to speak we strongly advise you to be well prepared. 3 minutes is about enough time to read out a single A4 sheet of text. If you run over your time the Chairman will stop you regardless of whether you have finished or not. If you are unprepared your 3 minutes be up before you have said much that is useful. So type out your speech in advance and practice it while timing yourself.

As with written comments what you say to the committee should be based on facts rather than emotion.

Note: Most simple applications are decided without being discussed at a committee meeting. For example in September 2018 while 26 applications were decided by the committee, 146 were decided by planning officers alone, resulting in 131 approvals and 15 refusals - these were mostly applications for extensions, conversions, changes of use or discharge / variation of planning conditions.