

Saxmundham Town Council

National Grid Electricity Transmission – Sea Link – EN020026

Saxmundham Town Council

Comments on Applicant's Change Request

Benhall Bridge – Traffic Diversion Route

1. Introduction

Saxmundham Town Council acknowledges that the Applicant has identified two engineering options for strengthening the B1121 bridge over the East Suffolk Railway Line at Benhall. Both options require a full closure of the road - either for the installation of a temporary mini-bridge (Option 1) or for permanent strengthening works (Option 2). In both scenarios, access would be retained only for residents of Benhall and Whitearch Park, with all other road users of the B1121 diverted through Saxmundham via the B1119.

The proposed diversion route - B1119 Rendham Road, Mill Road, Chantry Road and right onto the B1121 South Entrance (and vice versa) - raises significant concerns for the Town Council. This route passes through heavily residential areas and locations with high numbers of pedestrians, vulnerable users, and emergency service premises.

2. Key Constraints Along the Proposed Diversion Route

A summary of the issues is set out below:

- **A12/B1119 Junction Safety**

The A12/B1119 junction already presents well-known safety risks, particularly for vehicles turning right from the Framlingham direction towards Saxmundham, and those turning right from the B1119 to join the A12 northbound. Diverting additional traffic through this junction will exacerbate an already hazardous situation.

- **Impact on Residents, Vulnerable Users and Emergency Services**

Traffic from the A12 onto the B1119 immediately enters a residential area with a care home on one side and the Memorial Field (with a children's play area) on the other. Shortly afterwards, traffic passes the fire and ambulance stations and a zebra crossing used by families and older residents. Any increase in traffic volumes will increase risk to pedestrians and wheelers and could hinder emergency service operations.

- **Mill Road Level Crossing Constraints**

Mill Road is a residential, unclassified street. The level crossing closes twice per hour between approximately 06:00 and 23:00. Any significant rise in traffic will result in congestion, vehicle idling and driver frustration, particularly at peak times.

- Chantry Road Severe Constraints

Chantry Road lies immediately beyond the level crossing and includes a nursing home, Grade II listed cottages and part of Saxmundham's Conservation Area. Much of the road is effectively single-track with only one narrow footway, forcing pedestrians into the carriageway. The gross weight restriction (7.5 tonnes except for access) is designed to protect both the road and the adjacent heritage buildings, some of which are more than 500 years old. Even modest increases in car traffic, let alone improper use by HGVs, would create congestion, safety hazards and potential structural risk to listed properties and the multitude of services under the road surface,

3. Previous Representations

Saxmundham Town Council emphasises that the majority of our concerns regarding the suitability of the B1119 diversion route have already been set out in detail in our Relevant Representation and reinforced during the Open Floor Hearing. These issues are therefore well established on the record and should not require restatement in full at this stage. However, in light of the new information presented in the Change Request, we feel it is necessary to highlight the most critical unresolved matters.

4. Concerns with the Applicant's Assessment

Saxmundham Town Council has serious reservations about the Applicant's conclusions:

- Reliance on an 11.4% Increase Being 'Negligible'

The Applicant's statement that an 11.4% increase in traffic is negligible fails to take account of the context. The B1121 South Entrance is a wide two-way road with traffic signals, whereas Chantry Road is a single-lane bottleneck controlled by priority lights. An 11.4% increase at such a pinch-point is not negligible - it will generate congestion back to the level crossing and may compromise its safe operation.

- Claim of a 12.2% Reduction in Traffic at the B1121/B1119 Junction

We do not accept the claim that traffic at this junction will reduce. Vehicles travelling from the A12/B1121 Benhall junction would instead divert to the A12/B1119 Rendham Road junction. While there may be reduced flow at B1121 South Entrance, residents of Benhall, Sternfield, Snape and Aldeburgh will still use this route into Saxmundham. The Applicant appears to have assumed a redistribution pattern that does not reflect actual

travel behaviour. We request clarity on how the predicted reduction has been calculated.

- **Pedestrian and Wheeler Safety**

The Applicant has not demonstrated any meaningful assessment of increased risk to pedestrians, cyclists, mobility users or parents with pushchairs who routinely use the B1119 into the town centre. Chantry Road in particular is hazardous due to the absence of a safe passing width for pedestrians.

- **Air Quality and Amenity**

No reference appears to have been made to potential air quality impacts. Congestion in Mill Road and Chantry Road will inevitably lead to increased idling, worsening air quality for residents, schools, care facilities and users of the Memorial Field.

- **Heritage and Structural Risk**

Heavy vehicles are already prohibited from using Chantry Road except for access. Diverted traffic risks accidental HGV incursions. Vibrations from heavier or increased traffic could cause structural harm to nearby listed buildings.

- **Economic Impact on the Town Centre**

Increased congestion on key approach routes may deter shoppers and visitors, harming local businesses. The Applicant has not provided any assessment of economic impact.

5. Town Council Position and Recommendations

We note that the Applicant intends to ‘consider the potential impacts associated with the redistribution of Future Baseline traffic.’ However, based on the inadequacies identified above, Saxmundham Town Council remains opposed to the proposed diversion through the town and to the bridge strengthening project as currently presented. We strongly recommend:

- **Comprehensive Traffic Survey**

A full traffic survey covering flows from the A12 Benhall junction through the B1121/B1119 network.

- **20mph Town-Centre Speed Limit**

Applicant-funded, to mitigate heightened risk to pedestrians and wheelers.

- **Signal-Controlled Pedestrian Crossing on the B1119**

Near the Memorial Field, providing safe crossing during the diversion period. We would also welcome consideration of a permanent pedestrian crossing at this location as part

of long-term mitigation, given existing safety concerns and the increased footfall expected over coming years.

- Robust HGV Management Plan

Ensuring HGVs do not follow the diversion route as illustrated on Document 2.7: Access, Rights of Way and Public Rights of Navigation Plans, Version: B Version 2 Change Request, November 2025 but instead use the designated HGV routes identified by Suffolk County Council Highways.

- Instigation of a Yellow Box Junction (B1119/Seaman Avenue)

To ensure emergency vehicles are not delayed by queuing traffic during periods of increased congestion associated with the diversion route.

- ‘Keep Clear’ Road Markings (Chantry Road – Pharmacy Car Park/Rear Entrance)

Non-mandatory Keep Clear markings should be installed to maintain access to the Pharmacy car park and rear entrance on Chantry Road, supporting both public access and delivery operations throughout the diversion period.

Until these matters are fully addressed, including a realistic and context-appropriate understanding of traffic redistribution, Saxmundham Town Council cannot support the proposed approach.