

SCC suggests that the Examining Authority undertake a Site Inspection of the Applicant's proposed diversion route during closures of the Benhall Bridge which follows the A12, the B1119 before turning right down the B1121. SCC considers that driving along this route at peak times (such as between 08:00 and 09:00 on a weekday) would allow the Examining Authority to observe current levels of traffic along the route, particularly within Saxmundham, at peak times. Moreover, SCC considers that observation of SCC's safety concerns at the A12/B1119 junction, and congestion issues at the signalised crossroads, would provide additional evidence beyond what has been submitted into the Examination. SCC also considers that including a visit to Saxmundham on foot, including along the diversion route, at peak times would further assist the Examining Authority in understanding how the town is currently being affected by increased levels of traffic, including in terms of sense of place, and how this would be exacerbated during closures of the Benhall Bridge. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed diversion route is not finalised, it will provide the shortest route into Saxmundham and other areas otherwise accessed from the Benhall Bridge from the A12 during closures of the Benhall Bridge. As a result, it is likely that a substantial portion of diverted traffic will use this route even if the formal diversion route is changed. It should be noted that it is unlikely that the Applicant will be able to avoid closing the Benhall Bridge during weekdays completely under either option (i.e. the mini-bridge or strengthening the Benhall Bridge). Therefore, observation of the route during peak times would give a more accurate insight into the worst-case scenario. As pointed out by SCC [REP3A-031], the Applicant's assessment of effects during closures of the Benhall Bridge concludes that the adverse effects of the suggested diversion route will be negligible [CR1-055]. SCC detailed its concerns with the assessment as levels of diverted traffic appear to be underestimated and local knowledge of existing traffic and transport issues, such as at the A12/B1119 junction and within Saxmundham, suggest adverse effects will likely be greater than assessed. A Site Inspection would allow the Examining Authority to gain insight into the existing issues described by SCC and may put the Examining Authority in a better position to judge what level of effects are likely to transpire during closures of the Benhall Bridge.