

ALDHAM ROAD CLOSURE

Communication between Paul West Cabinet Member for Ipswich Operational Highways and Flooding, Suffolk County Council and Chairman Alan Newman Elmsett Parish Council. With copies to both Robert Lindsay, County Councillor and Mathew Hicks Leader of Suffolk County Council.

Subject: RE: Urgent road closure planned in your division - From 23 November 2023. CR 436245

From: Paul West

15 January

Dear Robert and Alan

Further to my email below, I have received an update from the Communications Officer (Milestone):

The Communications Officer can confirm Suffolk County Council's (SCC) Design team is still working on the designs for this scheme and a meeting is taking place shortly between SCC and Milestone to discuss a way forward and timescales for the repair works.

In the interim, the team have increased the diversion signage around this location whilst the road closure is in place to reduce the usage of unsuitable diversion routes.

Paul West

From: Paul West

15 January

Dear Robert and Alan

Thank you for your further emails dated 8 January. I have received the following information from a Highways Assessment Engineer (HAE):

Following from the HAE's previous update, he can confirm that the extra information signage is due to be installed on Monday 15th, which should help alleviate the issues.

I am awaiting further update in regards to progress with design work and will update you as soon as possible.

Paul West

From: Robert Lindsay (SCC Councillor) <<<

8 January

Dear Paul,

Just to underline what Alan is saying, information on any progress with design work will be immensely helpful with two whole villages waiting to hear what is being done.

I will forward this to the CLE.

Kind regards,

From: Alan Newman <
Sent: 08 January 2024 13:29
To: Paul West (SCC Councillor) <

I refer to my email of the 20th December to you and Matthew Hicks and to your replies. I am afraid that the situation with the diversion route has deteriorated further with increased overrunning. The bad weather and frequent heavy rain means that part of the diversion route at Flowton Brook is often impassable because of serious flooding, this forces more traffic to use Priory Road at Hintlesham. It is, in effect, a perfect storm!

The purpose of my email today is not just to reiterate my previous concerns but to alert you to the current heightened feelings in the village that we are being overlooked by the Highway Authority affecting travel and moreover seriously impacting businesses in the village, in particular trade at the village shop. Paul, you provided a comprehensive reply on the 21st December but since then we have heard very little. Two things both Elmsett and Aldham parish councils asked for was better communication and better signing along the diversion route. Put simply there is a feeling that nothing is being done.

Can we please have an urgent update on the progress with the repair? Has the collapsed road been the subject of engineering surveys, both geometric and soil condition? Has the retaining structure been designed? Has the construction method been agreed? And most importantly, has a date for commencement of the works been agreed? We are aware that these matters take time and fully understand the need for safety but it has been over 6 weeks now.

I turn now to the issue of better diversion signing. To my knowledge revised signs were provided at the diversion termination points off the A1071 but no revisions to signing along the route have been provided and there are a number of locations where traffic can join the diversion route other than from the A1071. Local traffic is aware of the routes but delivery drivers are not. Whilst writing I should make you aware that growing numbers of residents are calling for the full diversion route and Priory Hill to be gritted when the Priority 2 routes are being done.

Lastly no doubt you will have seen or been made aware that the local press and now Anglia TV are taking an active interest in this situation with the TV broadcasting a short documentary on their news programme, I understand that both the EADT and Anglia TV will be following this up shortly.

I look forward to your earliest reply.

Alan Newman
Chairman Elmsett PC

From: Paul West
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2023 11:55 AM
To: Alan Newman <
Dear Alan

Further to our previous correspondence on the above matter and your email below, I outline the latest position.

As you may be aware, Suffolk Highways recently closed a section of The Street in Aldham. This was due to the verge and part of the road collapsing.

It had been hoped that the road could be reopened to non-HGV vehicles only, under the use of temporary traffic signals. However, following a review of the site, it has been agreed that due to further deterioration, the safest option is to keep the road closed. With the weather we are currently experiencing, with extended periods of heavy rainfall, we cannot guarantee that the road will not collapse any further.

Whilst the road closure remains in place, through traffic will be required to follow the signed diversion route - The Street, Church Hill, A1071, Red Hill Road and vice versa.

We appreciate that the road closure is causing disruption to local businesses and residents in both Aldham and Elmsett. This was considered during our review but given the condition of the road, the safety of road users has to take priority. Our teams will be working on new signage for the road closure, to make it clearer as to why the road is closed. I have asked for these to be installed as soon as possible.

I can also confirm that this location has been commissioned for a detailed investigation and a permanent repair.

However due to the extensive work required, it is expected for the road to be closed for the next few months. I have asked for this site to be given priority and we will provide more detail as soon as it becomes available.

These updates will be provided to the local County Council and Parish Councils. We will also publish them on our website and social media accounts.

I apologise for the lack of communication in the last few weeks but have asked for procedures to be put in place to ensure that this is corrected on this matter going forward. Please be assured that everything I know on this matter is communicated above but please be assured that I am pushing for action as I know that is what you and your colleagues expect.

Kind regards
Paul West

Cabinet Member for Operational Highways and Flooding
Suffolk County Council

From: Alan Newman <

20 December

Dear Mathew and Paul

Thank you for your earlier replies

Councillor Lindsay has informed us of the nature and outcome of your Teams meeting earlier today, I look forward to the full report from Paul tomorrow. It gives me no satisfaction to point out that I informed you on the 9th December that a retaining structure was going to be needed to support the reconstructed highway. A number of our councillors were astounded when Councillor Lindsay reported to our parish meeting last week that the road was going to be opened in a matter of days to light traffic only and questioned the decision. Robert didn't have the answers and undertook to investigate. I am not going to ask why your engineers have taken two weeks to reverse that

decision, bearing in mind that the erosion of the road formation and the lateral surface cracking has been there for all to see. but I will tell you that the residents are rightly concerned and frustrated that we are no further forward with the repairs or revised signing, which were said to be ordered some time ago, and are also frustrated with the lack of communication from SCC.

This issue has not been handled well with little communication from SCC Highways. I can only say that the village keyboard warriors on FaceBook are having a field day and until now there has been no official comment.

To use a well laboured phrase - we are where we are - but in going forward I support the views of Jonathan Ralph (Chairman of Aldham PC) who wrote to Paul yesterday pleading for more communication and in addition I would ask for more transparency. This latest news will not be received well especially when you suggested earlier that the road would be opened by the end of last week. I should also add, as you may be aware, that the alternative routes are not at all satisfactory for the heavy traffic they are now receiving and the carriageway edges and verges are suffering badly. Have you a press release or update report that we can use to properly inform our residents please.

I look forward to your earliest reply

Kind regards

Alan Newman
Chairman Elmsett PC.

Paul West > wrote:

On 13 Dec 2023, at 09:10,

Dear Alan Newman

Thank you for your email dated 9 December regarding the road closure at Aldham. I have received the following information from a Highways Assessment Engineer:

The team are looking to remove the full closure at this location and install only an HGV closure so vehicles under 7.5t will be able to use the road. The team will change the signage so that it is clear that access to Aldham and Burstall is from the east side of the diversion.

The team have ordered the signs and hope to have them in place by the end of the week.

Once I have confirmation of when this will happen, I will update you further.

Kind Regards
Paul West

Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding
Suffolk County Council

From: Alan Newman on 9 December<

Dear Mathew and Paul,

in my role as Chairman of Elmsett Parish Council and with the support of the parish council I am writing to you both in your roles as Leader of Suffolk County Council and Cabinet Member for Operational Highways. I am not sure if the road collapse and subsequent emergency road closure at Aldham is on your radar yet and the purpose of this email is to escalate the issue in order that it is and to raise the priority of the much needed urgent repairs. The precise location of the collapse is to the west of Aldham on the C726 between the C724 and the U8415, the Aldham to Hadleigh road. Whilst the road is recorded as a C class road it is in fact a major transport route to our local villages.

Unfortunately this is not a simple road repair as the foundations for the C class road have been washed away, meaning that a retaining structure will have to be designed and constructed to support the reconstructed highway. Reading the email trail below will inform you of our plight and give you other information. The parish council supports our local businesses, our parishioners and our village shop keeper, Sasha Lawrence. Sasha's passionate emails below describe how most of the village feel about the situation. It is also unfortunate that the temporary diversion signage is misleading saying that Aldham Street is closed when it isn't and people have got lost trying to follow the suggested route. This was pointed out straight away but it seems there has been a reluctance to make the changes needed.

I would inform you that Councillor Robert Lindsay has reacted without delay on this issue but can I please ask that you investigate the matter and get back to the Parish Council with a date that the repairs will be commenced.

Very best regards

Alan Newman
Chairman Elmsett PC.