



# UFFORD PARISH COUNCIL

**Mrs. Judi Hallett, Clerk to the Council**  
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1<sup>st</sup> June 2024

Mr Andrew Cook  
Executive Director of Growth,  
Highways and Infrastructure,  
Suffolk County Council  
Highways  
[Andrew.Cook@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:Andrew.Cook@suffolk.gov.uk)

Mr Adam Breen  
Operations Manager,  
Costain Ltd  
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Ms Eleanor Lewis  
Head of Customer Experience  
in the East of England,  
Cadent Ltd  
[Eleanor.lewis@cadentgas.com](mailto:Eleanor.lewis@cadentgas.com)

Dear Ms. Lewis, Mr. Cook, and Mr. Breen,

## **Re. Proposed replacement of Gas Main: High Street, Ufford to Main Road Pettistree**

On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024, an 'Information Event' was hosted by Cadent Ltd, in Ufford Community Hall. Also present were SCC Highways and Costain Ltd staff. The objective of the event was to present details of the planned Gas Main Replacement works and to consult residents about the expected major road closure along High Street Ufford and through to Pettistree, to allow for the replacement of the 85 year old Gas Main.

### **1. The Impact of Cadent's current plans**

The event was attended by 140 local residents, from over 50 different post codes and 70+ comments were received (previously passed to your representatives). Ufford Parish Council has now analysed the comments received and we summarise the concerns broken down in to five categories:

#### **1.1 Impact on Village Lanes**

Should the road closure proceed as initially proposed by Cadent and its partners, as 12-week rolling road closure, this will cause chaos on our small village lanes. Roads such as The Avenue, School Lane, Spring Lane, Byng Hall Road and Loudham Lane, are all single track with limited or no passing places. These will become gridlocked as local traffic ignores the official diversion via the A12 and tries to circumnavigate the closure. We report this not as a 'maybe' but as a fact. In 2017 the Ufford High Street was closed for just 10 days when the pavement was upgraded outside the Goldsmiths development. That closure caused both The Avenue and School Lane to become totally overwhelmed with traffic, with drivers becoming irate and the police having to be called. Also, the traffic will inevitably include LGVs and even some HGVs, and will create damage to the roads and verges, and private land at the sides of the road and driveway entrances.

## 1.2 Impact on Local Businesses

Many local businesses rely on passing trade. If the High Street and the road to Pettistree are closed for any length of time that passing trade will be non-existent and will almost certainly result in the closure of some businesses. This would not only have an impact on the business owners but also result in lost employment for local people and will have a detrimental impact on the villages as a whole, potentially losing those services which are already scarce in a rural village.

You are already aware of the potential loss of The Ufford Crown but we have identified at least three other local businesses where the impact will be severe. These are Suffolk Plant Centre, M J Garage Services Ltd and Anglian Coastal Marquees - all three of these are in Pettistree parish.

The impact on local farmers would also be significant; particularly during harvest time and the sowing of winter crops. Many of these farmers contract farm land adjacent to or reached by the affected roads and may well be unable to reach their fields. Given the many large farms there are in the area it would be unwise to schedule any road closures during the harvest period. To have tractors, bulky agricultural machinery and HGVs all seeking cut throughs on our largely single lane country roads would no doubt result in chaos and ultimately gridlock.

## 1.3 Impact on Public Transport

Ufford High Street and Main Road Pettistree are major bus routes, allowing people to travel between Ipswich, Woodbridge, Wickham Market and Aldeburgh. Journeys are often for health reasons (Doctors/Dentist appointments, visits to Ipswich Hospital, etc.), for clubs and societies or for daily/weekly shopping. Closing these roads would result in the buses travelling along the A12 and not rejoining the B1438 until they are virtually in Melton; much too far to walk for many residents.

In addition, school bus transport would be disrupted. Buses to Farlingaye, Melton Primary, Thomas Mills and other local schools would be unable to pick up in Ufford, Pettistree or on roads leading to these villages. Any suggestion of alternative travel by taxi would be much more expensive with the longer route involved, if a taxi driver was willing to travel up and down the A12.

## 1.4 Impact on neighbouring villages

You only have to look at a map to see that residents of Wickham Market (numbering in the region of 3,000 now) and Pettistree have little option but to travel through Ufford when accessing the A12 in a southbound direction. The closure of the Ufford High Street and the road up to the A12 slip road, will send the majority of these vehicles via Loudham Lane, Spring Lane, School Lane and/or The Avenue; as described above.

In addition, the proposal to block off the A12 northbound slip road as part of Cadent's plan will disrupt traffic going north, and then having to travel through Wickham Market to join the A12 at Five Ways, Lower Hacheston. Both these scenarios leave a large increase in traffic along the narrow High Street in Wickham Market, and will lead to gridlock there. These works also appear to coincide with the start of the Sizewell C preparatory works at the Wickham Market Park and Ride, adding to the potential for more widespread disruption.

## 1.5 Impact on deliveries and services

Many Ufford residents rely on these roads for the delivery of goods and services. Faced with 'Road Closed' signs a long distance from the actual closure, many operators will turn around and will not deliver. In some circumstances these deliveries will be for vital supplies of food and/or medicine. There appears to be no provision planned or thought given to this by Cadent or its partners.

## **2. Planned Test Hole Sampling**

We would like to record our appreciation to Cadent and Suffolk County Council Highways for arranging for test hole drilling and sampling to take place over the next few weeks. We feel this is vital to allow engineers the opportunity to fully assess the situation below ground level and then to re-plan the works with greater depth of knowledge of the terrain.

However, given the terrain and length of the proposed roads affected, we request that at least 6 test hole sites are sampled over approximately one mile of affected road. The terrain is very different along the High Street and towards Pettistree and the pipelaying options could alter frequently given the boundary between clay and sandy soil bases.

We also request that Suffolk County Council require Cadent to share the results of this test hole sampling with both Suffolk County Council Highways and Ufford Parish Council; we have local Civil Engineers who will be looking at the results for us and advising us on the options.

## **3. Alternative solution**

Given that Cadent are also planning to close Byng Hall Road for an undisclosed period of time to install a 250mm PE pipe along its length, it would be sensible for Cadent to consider continuing this new install towards Hill Farm along the existing route of the 8 inch CI pipe that is scheduled to be abandoned.

Utilising this route would not require any closure to the High Street (B1438) and remove all disruption / reinstatement to the High Street carriageway. It would also benefit all residents, businesses and enable fewer changes to buses and deliveries.

We would challenge the proposal to disrupt the High Street and suggest Cadent review the route from scratch. Local landowners have already indicated to us, and we understand to Cadent representatives, a willingness to allow access and would welcome an alternative route.

## **4. Next Steps and Requirements for Agreement by Ufford and neighbouring Parish Councils**

The project proposed by Cadent is clearly important as part of the UK Government's requirement to replace ageing cast-iron gas mains. However, the nature of the project, its potential 12 plus weeks of full road closure in a busy village, and the predictable disruption, all require that Suffolk County Council, Cadent, Costain and the local parishes cooperate to find the "optimal solution". Any solution must minimise the time to complete works and must mitigate disruption to local communities.

Following the test hole sampling exercise and examination of the results, we request that the following actions are taken to achieve a workable way forward:-

1. The results of the test hole analysis are published by Cadent and shared on the promised dedicated web page for the project, and a link sent to us for publication within the local community. A meeting must be held with Suffolk CC Highways to review options for installing the new gas main whilst minimising disruption to traffic and its impact on local communities.
2. A new schedule of works must be drawn up and published (again sent to us for publication and wider dissemination). This schedule MUST allow for the works to be completed in the most efficient manner for the residents and businesses of Ufford and the surrounding villages, whilst delivering value for investment to Cadent and Suffolk Highways. This must include:

- a. Wherever possible working with traffic lights to control vehicle movements and keep the roads open.
  - b. Working longer hours to progress works more quickly
  - c. Consideration to relaxing any full road closures at the week-end and in the evenings, to allow traffic to flow
  - d. Effective and timely communication to be set up, targeted at all affected business and communities with a “hotline” for queries and for flagging problems
3. Details of the schedule of works to be passed to all bus companies, including those running school buses, and to local schools. From this a new timetable of bus routes and support buses must be published, sent to us and placed in all bus stops along the route.
  4. A review of the Cadent Compensation scheme to assure local businesses and ensure their continuity will not be compromised by these works. The current details of the Cadent Compensation do not support business continuity in that they are based on retrospective analysis and ignore the Covid impact on recent years’ trading (this last three years trading cannot by any measure be considered reflective of normal trading conditions for any business). Any revised scheme must be made available prior to the works starting with a dedicated support officer allocated for business owners to call.
  5. Details of the diversion signage must be provided, along with details of how vehicles will be prevented from using the single track lanes in Ufford, Pettistree and surrounding villages, unless they are residents, or if emergency or service delivery access is required. Additional signage is also required to inform the public that businesses remain open and accessible during the works.
  6. A fortnightly “problem solving” meeting is held between Suffolk County Council, Cadent, its partners and local parish councils, to flag issues and resolve problems. It is essential that this takes place at an early stage to rebuild community trust in Cadent, following their poor consultation launch.

Whilst our immediate concern is the disruption that will be caused by the closure of the High Street, B1438, we are also mindful of the plan to completely close Byng Hall Road for a period of time. This is of equal concern to residents and businesses and we expect that Cadent will fully explore all options and plans with SCC and Parish councils prior to commencement of this activity.

In conclusion, we understand that this work has to be completed. Gas is a vital commodity to Ufford residents and the loss of the service would be devastating for most. However, the planned works have to be balanced with the everyday needs of residents and businesses. We look forward to working with Cadent, Costain and Suffolk County Council on this project.

Yours sincerely,

*J Hallett*

Judi Hallett  
Clerk to Ufford Parish Council

Cc: Cllr. Alexander Nicoll, SCC  
Cllr. Sally Noble, ESC  
Cllr. Paul West, Cabinet Member for Ipswich, Operational Highways and Flooding, SCC  
Aaron Viles, Project Manager, East Network (NON MRP), Costain  
Simon Hutchinson, Press Officer – East of England network, Cadent  
Clerks of Wickham Market, Melton, Pettistree, Campsea Ash, & Bromeswell Parish Councils