



Rebecca Simcox  
St Margaret's Parish Council

**Cabinet Member for  
Highways and Transport**

Sessions House  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME14 1XQ

12 August 2024

Reference: 50316921

Dear Ms Simcox

Thank you for contacting us regarding Cripps Lane.

The works planned that will result in both Cripps Lane and High Street, St Margaret's at Cliffe being closed are Section 50 works to allow for a power connection to be installed for the new development. As stated in previous responses, under the Highways Act 1980, utilities have a statutory right to access, maintain and provide new connection to their assets on or around the highway. KCC have no involvement with the granting of planning permission for new developments. Planning permission is assessed and granted by the district council and not KCC. When planning permission is granted, under legislation set out by central government, KCC must accommodate the works required to connect the development to the main network.

As per our notification, the works will take place in two phases to help ensure the High Street is closed for as short a time as possible. The first phase will result in the closure of Cripps Lane only from the 2nd to the 8th of September. During this phase the High Street will remain open. The second phase of works will unfortunately require the closure of the High Street as well as Cripps Lane. Both roads will be closed from the 9th until the 13th of September. Whilst we understand the inconvenience and disruption of road closures both KCC and work undertakers must ensure the safety of the workers and the public first and foremost by law. KCC must also accommodate works where possible, as laid out in legislation by central government.

Please be assured that we work tirelessly to help ensure as little disruption is caused to the local areas surrounding works as possible. However, in this instance no lesser form of traffic management, such as temporary traffic lights, will be possible. Whilst the recent emergency works undertaken by UKPN at this location were able to be downgraded from a road closure to temporary lights, due to the location of these works within the highway, the road is not wide enough to allow for the required safety zone and the maintaining of even a single lane of traffic at the same time. As such the works must be undertaken under a road closure to ensure they meet the safety standard required. It will also not be possible to open the road overnight due to the open

excavations during the works and both the High Street and Cripps Lane will remain shut for the durations mentioned previously.

Unfortunately, KCC have no power to insist how long any set of works should take. Due to the variety of different works that take place on and around the network, it is down to those undertaking the work to assess how long a set of works will take.

However, we have several processes in place to ensure that work undertakers complete their works within a reasonable period. These processes include, for example, the permit scheme itself. All those wishing to undertake works on the maintainable network must apply to KCC beforehand. The only time permission is not required prior is in the case of an emergency, where the undertaker must let KCC know within two hours of starting works.

The Kent permit scheme is cost neutral to the tax paying public as the costs of running the scheme are borne by the applicants themselves. The fees due to the undertaker for each set of works depends on the category of road, the level of traffic management required and the duration of the works. As such it is in the best interests of the work undertakers to complete works as efficiently and safely as possible.

All road closures require a suitable diversion that meets the standards set out in legislation. To meet the required standard the roads on the diversion must be of the same category or higher and be suitable for all vehicles that would have used the original route. This can unfortunately lead to diversions being of some length and whilst we appreciate the inconvenience and frustration this can cause, both KCC and work undertakers must follow the legislation set in place. Neither KCC nor the work undertakers have any power to insist road users use the recommended route neither can we control driver behaviour – and the use of in-vehicle navigation aids, which we have no control over, can add to problems.

Whilst we understand and appreciate the frustration caused by road closures and their diversions both KCC and work undertakers must ensure the safety of all before anything else. Please be assured that we work constantly to reduce the number of closures where we can and limit the effects of works on the area as much as possible. However, as I am sure you can appreciate, we must work within the legislation set in place by central government and with the powers it gives both us and the work undertakers.

With regards to making Chapel Lane one way for the duration of the works, this would need to be requested by the work undertaker and is not something KCC would insist on. With regards to making it one way permanently, this is something that would need to be requested of our Highway Improvements team. To find out more about this process you can visit our website for the full outline of the process and what you will need to do, <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/what-we-look-after/roads/changing-roads-in-your-area>.

As stated in previous responses the best way to report issues to us or request further information would be through raising an enquiry through our official processes, either contacting our contact centre or using our online report a fault tool, 03000 418181 or <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>. As stated, this allows our teams to investigate and gather all the required information before replying. For enquiries you should receive an acknowledgement within five working days and full

response within 28 working days. For Member enquiries or complaints, you will receive an acknowledgement when it is logged on our system and full response within 20 working days. As previously stated, these timeframes are deadlines and if a response is possible sooner then please be assured that we will provide it sooner. Emailing teams or KCC staff directly should be an absolute last resort and not the first port of call wherever possible. Following the correct processes not only helps our staff manage workloads and ensure things are responded to in a correct and timely manner but that issues go to the correct team as quickly as possible without long email chains. It also ensures there is a record of the issues raised officially on our systems that can be referred to in future where needed.

We are sorry that you did not receive an acknowledgement email from our Streetworks East Team. Whilst an acknowledgement email would be preferable this would ideally be within five working days to align with our official enquiry process. Your original email was received on Friday the 2nd of August. Upon receipt of your email our Senior TSO for the Streetworks East team started the required investigation and began gathering the necessary information for a full response. All the required information was gathered ready for a full response to be drafted on Tuesday 6th August, two days ahead of the five working day acknowledgement deadline of Thursday the 8th of August. However, shortly before a response could be sent, your follow up email was received. Due to this email copying in KCC members our Streetworks Team were obliged (as per our complaints and enquiries processes) to wait for the member enquiry to be received before providing the details of the full investigation to them for response to be sent by them.

Thank you for raising your concerns with us and I hope the above information proves useful going forward.

Yours sincerely

**Neil Baker**

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport  
Kent County Council