

National Highways
Second Floor
Woodlands
Manton Lane
Bedford
MK41 7LW

17 November 2023

Dear Stakeholder,

**A12 Margaretting Bypass (junctions 13 and 15) concrete road reconstruction –
Ingatestone congestion**

I wanted to write to you to provide an update on the congestion along the B1002 in Ingatestone, following the closure of the A12 junction 15 entry slip road.

As I hope you're aware, we've been very active in issuing out communications to encourage positive driver behaviours and to deter 'rat-running' through Ingatestone since the start of our scheme to reconstruct the A12 between junctions 13 and 15.

This has included re-enforcing the importance of road users following our set diversion routes in newsletters, eBulletins, web updates, residential letters and through collaborative efforts with the local and county councils. We've also installed a signing strategy that informs road users of closures and the set diversion route, with electronic and 'black and yellow' road signs placed at strategic points. And we've also placed special signs that ask drivers to 'Follow diversion, not sat-nav', while stating that the B1002 is not to be used as a 'Through Route' to help with reduce rat-running through local communities.

Our traffic management team have been monitoring the congestion that has appeared following the closure of the A12 junction 15 entry slip road, which is being caused by drivers ignoring our diversion route (despite it only adding approximately 8 minutes to their journey). The slip road was originally scheduled to be closed in August, but we changed our plans to reduce the closure time, to help reduce the impact on the local community.

Having received communications from several concerned local residents at the end of October, and also having recently engaged with Alex Burghart MP, County Councillor Lesley Wagland, members of the Essex County Council highways team, and Ingatestone and Fryerning Parish Council, we've done a number of additional activities to continue to encourage better driver behaviour, so that road users take our set diversion route and not the B1002. This includes issuing out reminder communications (stating that the diversion route is just 8 minutes long), and organising even clearer sign messages. We are also arranging for electronic signs to be placed on the A414 to show the journey time for taking the diversion route.

In addition, we've asked if it's possible to send messages to parents and carers of the Anglo-European School, to see if they can car-share during this time and not collect and drop of their children at New Road, to help relieve congestion at peak times. Our monitoring has shown that these activities have helped to reduce the congestion, and we're continuing to work with Essex County Council and the local community to see what other tactics can be done to reduce it further.

A few customers have asked us to request that Essex County Council suspends the parking bays on the B1002, as this was done during our previous weekend closures. However, the parking bays act as a speed calming zone to help control motorists who fail to follow the set limit when driving through Ingatestone. Removing them could result in an increase of vehicles speeding at night, which is a common complaint that's made by residents who live along the B1002. A clearer route would also encourage further rat-running, which is something we've worked hard to reduce since the scheme began. We collaborated with Essex County Council and came to the joint decision not to suspend the bays, for the reasons outlined above.

We needed to close the A12 Junction 15 southbound entry slip road to allow us to safely reconstruct this section of the A12. Keeping either the junction 14 or junction 15 southbound entry slip road open while we reconstructed the other would dramatically increase the length of the scheme's programme, as well as its cost.

Our primary role is to deliver a better service for road users and to support a growing economy. We work in the interests of taxpayers, road users and the millions of people who rely on the network every day, and with this in mind, our teams will use the most efficient and safest way to complete the scheme.

When complete, the scheme will help unlock future local growth, support the business community and local authority developments, while also benefitting the wider economy. And by replacing the current concrete road surface with a new asphalt carriageway, we'll improve safety, create a smoother and quieter journey, and we'll provide a new modern road with a 40 to 50-year lifespan that'll be easier and quicker for us to repair, which means a reduced need to close this section of the A12 in the future.

I understand that reconstruction schemes such as this can be challenging for road users and local communities, and I apologise for the concern the closure of the junction 15 southbound entry slip has caused. We're working hard to complete the work at this location as soon as possible, and we've reassigned other works to focus our attention at junction 15, so we can re-open it in late December, despite the delays being caused by continued bad weather.

If you'd like to find out more about this work, please visit our webpage at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/A12Margaretting. Alternatively, you can call the National Highways Customer Contact Centre on 0300 123 5000, or email info@nationalhighways.co.uk.

You can also keep up to date on road closures by visiting our Traffic England website at www.trafficengland.com or by following our Twitter feed: @HighwaysEAST.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nisar Ahmad', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nisar Ahmad
Project Manager – National Highways