

Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council: Cycling/walking route proposal briefing

Benhall is just over 2 kilometres to the centre of Saxmundham. Yet it is almost entirely car-dependent. Only the determined – or foolhardy – will cycle or walk. Why? The route is along a narrow single track, national speed limit, lane with no space for a car to pass a pedestrian, let alone a cyclist. This then requires crossing the busy B1121 main road between Saxmundham and Benhall and continuing along a badly degraded narrow pavement to Saxmundham. Some of the road is 40 mph, but much is 60mph and larger vehicles and their wing mirrors come v close to walkers. Or, running parallel with the road with a hedge in between, on a, frequently muddy, designated footpath on farmland.

As it stands, this route can really only be used by adults walking. It is very difficult to supervise a child or dog as much of the route has to be one behind the other. It is impossible for anyone with walking difficulties to use a buggy or wheelchair. And this route is just 1.4 kilometres long (see attached map).

How would it be used?

Benhall & Sternfield residents*: Saxmundham is the services centre for Benhall and Sternfield so residents need to go to Saxmundham for GP, secondary school, library, shopping, transport for commuting and leisure, socialising, sport other than football, foodbank/social supermarket etc.

It would open up a new route for anyone needing to use a buggy or wheelchair.

Tourism: There is a large touring caravan site at Marsh Farm in Sternfield and another smaller adjacent one. In addition, at Whitearch Park, in addition to a small number of residential park homes, there are holiday units. A cycling/walking route between Benhall and Saxmundham would make these more attractive to visitors.

Saxmundham to Benhall: At the Ex Servicemans Village and Social Club there is a very active football group – the Benhall Badgers, with coaching and teams for all ages. The Club also has chess nights, table tennis, pool, quizzes, music nights, big screen sports and bar. Many of these members/visitors come from Saxmundham. Families with children at Benhall Primary School. And socialising with friends in Benhall and Sternfield.

Overall, this route would bring great social, health and safety benefits and dramatically reduce car usage/dependency.

Urgent need:

This route is urgently needed in the light of the considerable increases in traffic likely for the National Grid Sealink and Lionlink converter stations (it seems almost certain they will select the southern access from the A12 – which would use the B1121 and bring several hundred HGvs and LGVs daily).

This is a short cycling/walking route of just over 1.4 kilometres in length (see attached map) which can create a modal shift in how people move between Benhall & Saxmundham and vv. It will bring great benefits and, we believe, prove the value of such improvements not just in this case but as an example for other East Suffolk villages

From the Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council Cycling/Walking Working Group (Bev Barclay, Chair, and Councillors Sue Nicholson and David Secret)