

Re: Hoggs Lane, bridge over Black Brook

2 Springwood Cottages,
Hoggs Lane,
Chorley,
Lancashire
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22-May-2020

Dear Kath Almond,

I write regarding the bridge over the Black Brook on Hoggs Lane¹ and its urgent need for maintenance.

Location: The bridge (*Image 1*) is on Hoggs Lane spanning the Black Brook, and is reached by turning off the A6 at the end of Albany School railings when travelling towards Bolton.

Construction: & Age The Romanesque style bridge (*Image 2 and 3*) was constructed, I believe before the 1840's which is the approximate date of construction of my house (2 Springwood Cottages), and its semi detached partner (4 Springwood Cottages) owned by Mr. Gordon Heaton. However, there is a bridge across the Leeds Liverpool canal which feeds down Hoggs lane and as this canal was opened in 1774 and the bridge over the canal has many similarities with that over the Black Brook the bridge could be older. As far as I know the bridge is not listed.

The construction of the Bridge is of the romanesque style from stone with a keyed arch. The bridge parapet is held together with steel bars let into the stone and sealed with lead. Although the bridge was built in the days of horse drawn carriages the construction was exceedingly well done and the bridge has carried heavy lorry loads of building materials (which I estimate to have been circa 30 tons in some cases) to new properties built at the top end of Hoggs lane.

Previous maintenance: About 50 years ago the bridge received extensive maintenance, by some public body at public expense. We made no contribution in labour or capital. At that time all the foliage was removed and all the stone work was re-pointed with Portland cement and the parapet was made good. Some of the parapet stones have bolts holding them together, sealed with cement which were probably done at this time.

Current state: The bridge is still in extremely good condition overall with much of the pointing strong and intact and the key stones showing no sign of movement. However, some of the parapet stones are in poor condition and are in need of urgent maintenance to consolidate the split stones and prevent further deterioration. One centre stone is in a very

¹The lane name is from a Mr. Joseph Hogg and then his son who were bailiffs for the Duxbury estate in the 19th century.

weak state and could easily fail if subject to abuse (*Image 4 and 5*). Previously, at least 50 years ago, two split stones on the upstream side were strengthened with bolts (*Image 6 and 7*). The bridge is a popular place for young children to play Pooh sticks with a rush from the upstream side of the parapet to the downstream side (with the weak stone) to see the sticks floating by. I am fearful that the parapet could fail at such a moment leading to a potential tragedy. Additionally some sink holes have appeared on the downstream side of the bridge near the centre, directly above where the utilities: gas, water and electric pipes and cables that feed both number 2 and number 4 lie. (*Image 8*). Some careful excavation and recovering of these would be advantageous. Additionally during heavy rain storms, water runs off the A6, down Hogs Lane and finally runs into the Black brook, by the side of the bridge and has come with such force that a small valley has been cut into the soil and on occasion the torrent has exposed the utility supplies to both mine and Mr. Heaton's home (*Image 8*). Mr. Heaton, my Father and I have covered these up with rubble that eventually washes away. A better solution with thick steel anchored into ground such that the services would be protected from the torrents and retain cover over the pipes/cable is needed.

Communication with authorities: In 2017 Chorley Council were informed of the bridge situation and the need for maintenance, but they had no record of the bridge and referred me to the Lancashire County Council. On the 27th of February of 2017 I was given a reference number 163-7068 by Lancashire County Council and on the 6th of March of 2017 one of their officials came to view the bridge. He agreed that maintenance was needed, but said that bridge ownership was unknown. Since then I have received no further communication.

Hogs Lane surface: The Lane is classified on the Definitive Map as a foot path and it is extremely popular with walkers, with greatly increased numbers due to the Corona 19 Pandemic.

Additionally, following a planning decision 97/00664/OUT (*Appendix 1*) on the 10-3 1998 access was also allowed for motor vehicle to 3 properties, extended to 5 (later 6 & and a very large “garage” with living accommodation) that were built on land at the far end of Hogs Lane, near the Leeds Liverpool canal. This planning consent was given because it was stated it was the only way to provide a new road that would cross the Black Brook. This road and bridge were never built. However, the planning decision has useful information.

We considered that the planning application was wrong and we objected (*Appendix 2*) via the Ombudsman as it classed Hogs Lane as a private road whereas our research indicates it is owned by the Council, because no consideration was given to the existing hedge, despite the Hedgerow protection act, because the developer claimed to have access rights over Hogs Lane when he did not and had been refused by the Council among other matters. But our complaints were rejected (*Appendix 3*).

We also applied to have the lane listed as a byway open to all traffic, but this was rejected see *Appendix 4*. This document also has useful information stating that the Council has confirmed that it owns the lane up to the railway bridge (page 3, point 6). It seems

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impossible for the Council to own the lane but not own the bridge without which there would be no lane.

The lane and bridge has been used for the transport of all the building materials to the new properties and it is also used for deliveries of big items. An 18 wheeler drove up the lane yesterday, and had to reverse out. Last year an 18 wheeler was driven into the hedge by my garage up-rotting several hawthorn shrubs. The driver did not report the accident.

Both Mr. Heaton and myself have kept the vegetation cut back on the lane, at our own expense, to allow large vehicles to move along the lane unhindered, such as for example a fire engine in an emergency, but the effect of all the additional road traffic has been detrimental to the tarmac surface that was put on by Mr. Mckeown and there are several pot holes.

There are no speed restrictions on the road although there are sleeping policemen further up the lane. Some drivers drive at speeds that are dangerous to the many pedestrians and dogs that use the lane.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Arthur E. Smith



Image1, View of the Bridge on Hoggs lane, towards the A6



Image 2 View of the bridge, upstream side.

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Image 3 Underside of the bridge



Image 4. Split parapet on the down stream side. Note how the parapet stones were held by steel which was held in place with lead. The bottom side is till good, the upside has failed.

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Image 5. The parapet stones were also held by horizontal steel bars. This one is still holding whereas the top steel had gone, just a small piece of steel is on the right hand side.



Image 6 Lane side of a spit parapet stone on the upstream side held together with two bolts
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Image 7 Water side of the split parapet stone showing nuts on bolts



Image 8 Two of the four sink holes over the utility supplies for 2 and 4 Springwood Cottages

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Image 9. Storm water running off the A6 and down Hoggs Lane. This is the most recent exit to the Black Brook, but on many occasions the storm water has come down by the side of the bridge, cutting the valley shown next to the bridge and exposing utility supplies at the top.

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