



SAC/CC Information Note Dukes Avenue Railway Bridge June 2020

1) What is the issue?

The Dukes Avenue Bridge traverses a significant pedestrian access point (Gate 10) to Alexandra Park and Palace (See location picture below).

The bridge has been subject to regular inspections by Department of Transport (DfT) over many years, but in recent months, the frequency of inspections has increased significantly. The Trust were contacted by DfT in mid-March 2020 to advise that they were looking to demolish the bridge on health and safety grounds, due to concerns about its structural integrity.

Generally, DfT tend to repair structures where possible. However, they have advised that the defects are severe and the required repairs extensive. Due to the deterioration rate, DfT are concerned that the bridge will need to be demolished sooner rather than later. The weather patterns in recent months have caused issues with a number of similar structures that DfT are responsible for, so they are keen to act quickly.

The bridge is also a location that attracts frequent Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). Around two years ago some security fencing was installed by DfT in an attempt to discourage the ASB on the deck of the bridge (drug-taking/ dealing and general vandalism).

2) Who owns the Dukes Avenue bridge?

The bridge and the land it sits on are the responsibility of DfT, even though it is within the parkland. The structure itself and the land beneath it is Crown property.

3) What responsibility does Alexandra Park and Palace Charitable Trust (APPCT) have for the bridge?

APPCT have no responsibility for the bridge. However, whilst it is not the Trusts property we recognise the importance of its heritage in the story of Alexandra Park and Palace. APPCT remove the graffiti from the bridge to improve presentation of the site, acting as 'a good neighbour'. Our security staff respond to calls regarding ASB on and around the bridge as and when resources allow.



Location of bridge circled in red

4) Why do the DfT want to demolish it?

The DfT assessment of the bridge's structure suggests that in its current state it represents a risk to public safety. The engineer is also concerned that the increasing cycle of drought and very wet weather affects the ground conditions. The exacerbation of the natural shrinking and swelling of the London clay will cause a rapid deterioration of the condition of the bridge – leading to an emergency closure of the path beneath it. DfT are looking into whether they can demolish the bridge as 'permitted development' in line with the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, Schedule 2, Part 19, Class Q. However, the Council exercising its powers as the LPA do not agree that the demolition would be permitted development. It is the Council's opinion that that part of the GPDO can only be exercised on 'emergency' grounds, not 'health and safety'. The Council's assertion draws support from the inspection report and conclusions carried out by its structural engineers.

5) Is the bridge listed?

The bridge is locally listed in Haringey's Local Plan and is within a Conservation Area, so there is a presumption (in planning terms) for its retention.

A locally listed building is a building or structure of architectural or historic interest, which makes a valuable contribution to the character of an area, but does not qualify for inclusion on the statutory list. These are non-designated heritage assets.

Additional conservation considerations are given to the alteration of these buildings and the Council will seek to ensure that the special character of such buildings is protected and enhanced.

The bridge is listed as a Designated Site of Industrial Heritage Interest (GLIAS).

6) What is the history of the bridge?

The Edgware, Highgate & London Railway obtained an Act in 1862 to build a line from a junction with the GNR at Seven Sisters Road station (now Finsbury Park) to Edgware. The following year the Midland Railway received authority to build a line between Bedford and St Pancras, which would provide a quicker route into central London from the Mill Hill area. To improve the prospects of their Edgware line the EH&LR proposed a branch from Highgate to Muswell Hill serving the new Alexandra Palace and its pleasure grounds - and an extension of the main line from Edgware to Watford.

Alexandra Palace Station was built at the same time as the Palace, opening in May 1873. It closed temporarily just two weeks' later as a result of the fire, but soon reopened to take people to see the ruins of the first Palace.

The fortunes of the railway and station were closely tied to the Park and Palace. Due to insufficient demand (few weekday commuters) and competition from the new, more convenient tram services resulted in the line and station being closed 9 times between 1873 until the last day of public service on 5 July 1954. The station was partially dismantled in the late 1950s and lines were pulled up to make way for car auctions, which occupied the Palace's North Yard, as we now call it, until the early 1970s.

An article from the Bowes Park Weekly News dated 26 May 1906, describes the "New Entrance to the Palace" from Dukes Avenue under the railway bridge. The Historic England listing for the Park and Palace also mentions the entrance "under the railway arch, was opened in 1906, mainly to provide access from Muswell Hill to the new tram terminus." The bridge remained in the ownership of the then British Rail (Residuary) Board, (now HRE). The railway station became the responsibility of Haringey Council in 1980 when it inherited the trusteeship of the charity. Part of the site was retained as a British Rail laboratory, sold later to the Lab (gym), part of it remained with the Trust and is leased to a charity (CUFOS), part went to the school and the bridge was retained by DfT.

7) What conversations is the Trust having with DfT and the Council?

The Trust is in regular contact with the Project Lead at DfT/HRE. The DfT/HRE have a duty to keep the public safe and the Trust will cooperate and work with them to ensure a safe environment is established.

Following an inspection by Haringey Council's Building Control team, the Trust has fenced off an area of pathway that is close to some cracked brickwork. This fencing has been installed without prejudice – the responsibility of the bridge lies with DfT/HRE. The Trust has made it clear that we feel the permitted development route should not be utilised if DfT decide demolition is the correct treatment for the bridge.

The Trust has also made it clear that as a heritage structure we would expect that consideration is given to future heritage interpretation of the area, in what is left standing and the landscaping of the area.

8) What are the other options?

As a locally listed structure, there is a presumption in favour of retention, and all reasonable options should be explored before demolition. A building control surveyor from Haringey Council has inspected the structure and Haringey Planning are in conversation with DfT about options and timescales.

9) What are the Trust's aspirations for the site?

The bridge is an important historical feature that remains to tell the story of part of the history of the site, wider area and London's transport network. Whilst we recognise that the safety of the public has to be the primary concern and that it is not the Trust's property, we would hope that DfT recognise the historic importance and take every reasonable step to repair and conserve it.

If demolition is the only option then we will urge DfT and the planning authority to consider a demolition that safely retains part or parts of the structure so that some of the physical heritage is retained. We will ask that DfT consider the antisocial behaviour in and around this area in deciding what elements of the structure can be retained and how the site and the public can be protected.

The Trust is not in a financial position to take responsibility and ownership of the structure without a sufficient endowment to ensure that the structural risk can continue to be managed, monitored and mitigated to a suitable standard.