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Councillor Steve Forster
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DRAFT LETTER FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

By email: steve.forster@hants.gov.uk

[15] October 2026

Dear Cllr Forster

B3054 Beaulieu highway classification drainage and pedestrian safety

Thank you for your detailed and helpful 12 August response to Cllr Dan Poole concerning the B3054 through Beaulieu. I apologise for the delayed reply.

Your explanation of how the different classifications apply to the B3054 provides a helpful framework for considering their implications for Beaulieu. As you mention, this is a long road, and for clarity, we are specifically concerned about the section between Hatchet Pond and Hilltop. Beyond this 'village section', traffic generally moves more steadily over flatter terrain, and the maintenance issues, while important, differ in scale and nature.

This village section of the B3054 combines a rural setting and the physical constraints of a historic village with a high level of measured traffic volumes, including substantial HGV and tractor movements. This combination places particular demands on the carriageway, drainage and pedestrian routes, with associated safety risks to people, animals and property. Therefore, ensuring the categorisations accurately reflect these local circumstances is important to secure the appropriate level of inspection, maintenance, and safety support.

1. Carriageway classification and maintenance priorities

Our traffic surveys have recorded 12,000–13,000 vehicles per 24 hours, a volume comparable with that of a busy A road. This includes substantial movements of large HGVs, exacerbated by the restrictions at Ampress Bridge you refer to, and the additional loading you acknowledge.

These demands are concentrated on the village section, which has steep gradients, constrained carriageway widths and inadequate pedestrian routes immediately alongside traffic. The persistent drainage problems and repeated deterioration of the road surface demonstrate the practical maintenance demands arising from this combination. Its inclusion in Hampshire's Priority 1 salting route and Resilient Network recognises its importance in maintaining local connectivity.

Taken together, we believe these characteristics justify Category 2 treatment within Hampshire's carriageway hierarchy. The associated higher inspection frequency, drainage cleansing provision and structural maintenance priority better reflect the actual demands and risks on this section.

We are not seeking an A-road designation, which could encourage further through traffic through a historic village. We also understand your point that a higher-ranking B road may be better placed for structural maintenance funding than a lower-ranking A road.

We therefore request a formal review of the Hatchet Pond–Hilltop section against Hampshire's Category 2 criteria, while retaining its B-road designation. We would welcome the opportunity to examine the supporting evidence with you and the highways team, alongside a separate review of the footway categorisation discussed further below.

2. Drainage maintenance and road resurfacing

Annual drainage cleansing is inadequate for the persistent problems on Palace Lane Hill and Harlick Hill, where water frequently flows freely down and across the carriageway. The problem appears to stem from the lack of cleansing of the connecting drainage pipes and outlets, not just the gullies. This creates a significant safety hazard in wet and freezing conditions.

Road surface maintenance currently consists largely of localised patch repairs. On these hills, these repairs frequently break up over winter, aggravated by persistent water and freezing conditions. Repeated patching without addressing the underlying drainage problems appears inadequate and uneconomic, and it may raise road safety issues.

The Department for Transport's 2012 potholes review identifies water ingress, freeze–thaw cycles and inadequate drainage as causes of deterioration, and stresses the importance of drainage maintenance and durable repairs. The Department's collision reporting also recognises poor or defective road surfaces as a possible contributory factor. We are particularly concerned about the potential for sudden braking or evasive manoeuvres on damaged, wet gradients carrying substantial HGV traffic.

We therefore ask Hampshire to please inspect the drainage systems on both hills thoroughly, including the connecting pipework and outlets, and introduce a minimum twice-yearly inspection and cleansing programme. Your policy already allows increased cleansing where flooding problems are known. This should be followed by proper, full resurfacing of the affected stretches, rather than continued patch repairs, to provide a durable, safer solution with better long-term value.

3. Pedestrian safety and footway classification

Palace Lane's Category 4 footway classification does not, in our view, adequately reflect its significant pedestrian risks. It is a popular route for tourists as well as residents, but is exceptionally constrained, with narrow footways, inadequate or absent kerbing in places, and pedestrians immediately alongside heavy traffic, including large HGVs and tractors. The chicane by the Montagu Arms is particularly hazardous for older people, families with pushchairs, schoolchildren and people walking dogs.

In our view, Palace Lane presents greater pedestrian risks than either the High Street or Lyndhurst Road, yet both those roads have the higher Category 3 classification. Although both categories receive quarterly inspections, your response explains that defects on Category 3 footways are assessed as carrying a higher risk. We therefore request a review of Palace Lane's

classification to ensure that maintenance priorities reflect the greater risks pedestrians face there.

A minor incident recently involved a pedestrian by the bridge. Thankfully, it did not result in serious injury, although HCC was unfortunately not notified. We are keen to prevent a more serious accident and request a specific pedestrian safety assessment through the village, with agreement on practical measures to improve separation from vehicles.

The kerbs and footway around the Montagu Arms chicane require an urgent, detailed inspection. The kerbs are particularly treacherous and, in our view, need urgent maintenance and rebuilding to provide a safe walking surface and adequate separation from passing vehicles. These immediate hazards need urgent attention while the wider reviews are undertaken.

Alongside these repairs, we ask Hampshire to assess suitable pedestrian warning markings in both directions on the carriageway approaching the Montagu Arms chicane. These markings would alert drivers in advance to the risk of pedestrians walking alongside and crossing the road and reduce the risk of an incident.

Next steps

These are longstanding concerns for the Parish Council. An on-site meeting with you and the relevant highways officers would be greatly appreciated and would allow us to demonstrate the problems and discuss and agree on action. We would also invite Councillor Dan Poole to join us, if available. Please contact me so that we can agree suitable dates.

Thank you again for your helpful response. We are keen to work constructively with Hampshire to address these issues before a serious accident occurs.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Hubbard
Chairman, Beaulieu Parish Council

cc: Cllr Dan Poole