**Mr Tony Coppock**

Structures Engineer  
Southwark Council  
Environment and Leisure – Highways Division  
Floor 3; Hub 2  
160 Tooley Street  
PO Box 64529  
London  
SE1P 5LX

**Mr Daniel Simmons**

Director and Principal Ecologist  
Simlaw Ecology Limited  
Milton Heath House  
Dorking  
Surrey  
RH4 3NB

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**Project Reference:** SE1920-1151

Dear Mr Coppock,

This letter report provides the background, methodology, findings and subsequent recommendations made, following the bat tree assessment carried out at Cox's Walk, Sydenham Hill Woods, Southwark on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

## Background

Simlaw Ecology was commissioned to carry out a ground-based and climbed bat tree assessment of two trees located near to a pedestrian footbridge on Cox's Walk Bridge (T001 and T002) in November 2019.

The surveys were required following identification of Potential Bat Roosting Features (PRF) within the trees by Local Residents and The Local Planning Authority. All species of bat found in the United Kingdom, and their roosts, receive protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); and, under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). The legislation makes it an offence for any person to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Deliberately disturb a bat while it is occupying a place of rest;
- Intentionally or recklessly destroy a breeding or resting place (roost) of a bat; and,
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access for bats to a roost or to otherwise significantly alter the structure of a roost so as to render it unsuitable to support roosting bats.

The bat tree assessment was therefore required to determine the presence or likely absence of bat roosts within the two trees, and to assess their potential to support roosting bats, prior to the proposed felling works taking place.

The inspection was further required to inform advice on the requirement, or otherwise, for further bat surveys or mitigation measures to be carried out prior to the proposed works.

## Methodology (Surveys)

A site visit to undertake a ground-based and climbed tree inspection of the two trees at Cox's Walk Bridge was carried out on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

Each of the trees was first inspected from ground-level, using close focussing binoculars and, where required, a 1-million candle power spotlight, in order to identify any potential bat roosting features (PRF) within them. Target PRF's included: knot holes, desiccation fissures, lifted bark, hazard-beams or any other sites of damage, disease or association (e.g. dense ivy cladding) on the trees, that could create voids or crevices in which bats could roost.

Both trees were then climbed using a rope and harness in order to access and closely inspect each of the PRF identified during the ground-based inspection.

A RIDGID SeeSnake Micro SA-300 video endoscope and a LED Lenser L7 hand torch were used, where required, in order to achieve a thorough inspection of each of the identified PRF.

Consideration was given to the species of bat, and type of roost (summer, transitory, maternity, feeding perch, hibernation), that might be associated with any PRF inspected; and, the potential for any such roost to be present (Low, Moderate, High or Present).

## Results

Both trees were subject to a ground-based tree assessment and climbed tree inspection. A photograph of each tree, together with any recorded PRF and notes on their potential to support roosting bats, is provided in Table 1, overleaf. Internal photographs of each PRF are provided in Appendix 1.

**Table 1:** Ground-based and Climbed Tree Inspection Results

**TREE: T001**

**Species:** Pedunculate Oak

**DBH:** 69cm

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Location:** TQ 34448 72818

**Height:** 17.0m

**Potential Roost Type:** Occasional



**T001-PRF-A**

**Type:** Tear-out

**Location:** Limb

**Height:** 3.75m

**Direction:** Northeast

**Bat Roost Potential:** Negligible

**Rationale:** Superficial ingress and presence of competitors (spiders and slugs).



**T001-PRF-B**

**Type:** Tear-out

**Location:** Limb

**Height:** 8.5m

**Direction:** North

**Bat Roost Potential:** Negligible

**Rationale:** Superficial ingress.

**Table 1:** Ground-based and Climbed Tree Inspection Results



**T001-PRF-C**

**Type:** Bat box

**Location:** Stem

**Height:** 11m

**Direction:** East

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Rationale:** Empty, with one bird dropping. Could be occupied at a later date but no evidence of past occupation at time of survey.



**T001-PRF-D**

**Type:** Knot-hole

**Location:** Limb

**Height:** 5m

**Direction:** East

**Bat Roost Potential:** Negligible

**Rationale:** Small crevice filled with a slug and damp debris. Insufficient ingress for bats.



**T001-PRF-E**

**Type:** Pruning-cut

**Location:** Limb

**Height:** 5.5m

**Direction:** East

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Rationale:** Open at top to light and rain. Partially full of leaves but some clean, dry spaces. Defunct bird nest / scrape at the base.



**T001-PRF-F**

**Type:** Transverse-snap

**Location:** Limb

**Height:** 10.5m

**Direction:** Northeast

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Rationale:** Generally open and exposed with one, dry, wedge-shaped space between bark and heartwood. Too exposed to support bats.

**Table 1:** Ground-based and Climbed Tree Inspection Results

**TREE: T002**

**Species:** Pedunculate Oak

**DBH:** 91cm

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Location:** TQ 34444 72822

**Height:** 17.0m

**Potential Roost Type:** Unknown



**T002-PRF-A**

**Type:** Bat box

**Location:** Stem

**Height:** 13m

**Direction:** East

**Bat Roost Potential:** Low

**Rationale:** Empty and clean. No sign of past habitation by bats or birds although birds seen intermittently visiting to forage.

## Recommendations (Bats)

Tree T001 contained six Potential Bat Roosting Features, three of which were assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats (PRF-A, PRF-B and PRF-D); and, three as having low potential to support roosting bats (PRF-C, PRF-E and PRF-F). T001 was therefore assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats.

Tree T002 contained one Potential Bat Roosting Feature (PRF-A) which was assessed as having low potential to support roosting bats.

Removal of PRF with **Negligible** is unlikely to result in unlawful impacts to bats. Removal of PRF with **Low** potential to support roosting bats (T001-PRF-C, T001-PRF-E, T001-PRF-F and T002-PRF-A) is also unlikely to result in unlawful impacts to bats, as each of the PRF have received one close inspection and no evidence of past use by bats was recorded.

There is, however, a very low residual likelihood that individual bats may have found and utilised these features to roost between the time of the last inspection and the time of the works. As a precautionary approach, it is therefore recommended that the removal of these features is supervised by an ecologist and should be immediately preceded by a close inspection carried out by a licensed bat ecologist.

Two features within the trees (T001-PRF-C and T002-PRF-A) are bat boxes, it is therefore recommended that these are moved to suitable locations on nearby mature trees. Following removal from the trees the bat boxes should be repositioned in suitable locations under the guidance of the ecologist supervising the works.

It is recommended that two oak saplings of local provenance are planted in place of the two felled trees in order to provide long-term compensation for the loss of the existing trees following the completion of the works.

## Recommendations (Birds)

Trees T001 and T002 contained a low number of features with potential to support nesting birds, some of which contained evidence of prior use by breeding birds; therefore, these features were assessed as having high potential to support nesting birds.

All birds, and their active nests, are protected under Sections 1-8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislative instrument it is an offence to:

- Intentionally Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is being used or built; and/or,
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of a wild bird.

It is therefore recommended that felling of T001 and T002, should take place outside of the main nesting season for birds, which typically runs from March to August, inclusive. This will ensure that no active bird nests are present within the features at the time of the works and, therefore, that the proposed remedial tree works do not result in unlawful impacts to breeding birds.

If felling is scheduled to take place during the bird nesting season (March-August, inclusive), then a further climbed inspection must be carried out in order to determine the presence or likely absence of active bird nests within them.

If an active nest were found, an exclusion zone would need to be established to prohibit works in the vicinity until a suitably experienced ecologist verifies that the chicks have fledged the nest, or until the bird nesting season has passed.

Compensation for the loss of suitable bird nesting habitat should be provided in the form of equivalent number of bird boxes hung on mature trees in the vicinity, which are appropriate for the bird species that are likely to be present in the area.

### Summary of Recommendations

In summary, the Cox's Walk Bridge Oaks had low potential to support bats and may therefore be felled under the supervision of an ecologist and immediately following a close inspection carried out by a licensed bat ecologist. The bat boxes should be moved to suitable locations on mature trees in the surrounding area and two replacement oak samplings planted following the completion of the works.

I trust that this letter report contains sufficient information for Southwark Council to progress with their proposals without unlawful impacts to roosting bats or nesting birds.

If, however, you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of the team on the details below.

With best wishes,



**Daniel Simmons** Director and Principal Ecologist

S I M L A W E C O L O G Y

**T:** 01306 898 400

**M:** 07826 856 356

**E:** daniel@simlawecology.uk

**www.simlawecology.uk**

Appendix 1: Climbed Bat Tree Inspection - Internal PRF Photographs

TREE T001

PRF-A

External



Internal



PRF-B

External



Internal



**PRF-C**

External



Internal

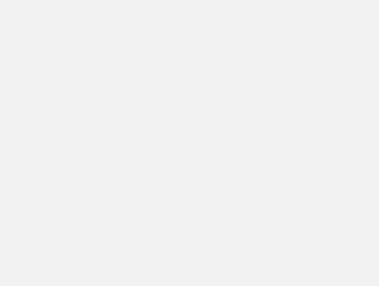


**PRF-D**

External



Internal



**PRF-E**

External



Internal



**PRF-F**

External



Internal



**TREE T002**

**PRF-A**

External



Internal

